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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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THE UNITY  
OF INDIA

*Collected Writings*

1937-1940

1948

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## FOREWORD TO THE SECOND IMPRESSION

THE present edition of "Unity of India" is a reprint of the first edition. Apart from corrections of typographical and other errors, no alterations or additions to the original work have been made. Communication with the author has been difficult, partly owing to war conditions, but chiefly due to Pandit Nehru's imprisonment from November, 1941, to December, 1942.

In a volume like "Unity of India," which largely deals with current topics, developments and interpretations of Indian and world events, it would have been of great advantage if it had been possible to include the author's views of the great happenings of to-day. Though he has been shut out from most of these by prison walls, Pandit Nehru has revealed once again by his utterances after his release, his keen grasp of world affairs and his insight into the implications of current developments.

The suggestion has been made to me, as editor, that some of the author's more recent statements, which have appeared in the press, should be selected and included in this edition. While I greatly value this suggestion and appreciate the reasons that prompt it, I did not consider that any additions from such sources as are now available would in any real sense bring the volume up to date.

Meanwhile, the demand for "Unity of India" has been growing in volume and insistence, and it has not been possible to meet it for the last several months owing to present conditions relating to paper and printing.

Reading over these pages once again, one is deeply impressed by their essential topicality. Much that is said is being borne out, if tragically, by events; they still provide warning and guidance.

India is being increasingly recognised as one of the major questions in world politics to-day. Her future, more particularly in recent months, has begun to rest on the initiative and determination of her own peoples. The abdication of her rulers, of almost all but their coercive tasks, is becoming more apparent. To the understanding of the vital developments in India, especially in the face of the campaign of misrepresentation and ignorance that prevails, Jawaharlal Nehru's writings make a phenomenal contribution.

To-day Nehru leads the Indian people. He truly reflects their will, their passion and their determination to freedom. To-day as in the past, Nehru sees the problem of India, as of every other country, in the context of world events. To-day, as always, he is the unbeaten soldier of democracy and the opponent of authoritarian imperialism.

We should understand each and all of these factors if we are to understand the vital currents that move the Indian masses. This alone is ample justification for issuing this second edition, even if it is only a reprint.

V. K. KRISHNA MENON.

## FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE "Autobiography" of Jawaharlal Nehru is still the best book on modern India, up to 1935. The objectivity and restraint that characterize Jawaharlal Nehru's thought and writing make the "Autobiography" history and not merely memoir.

"The Unity of India" deals with events and developments since 1935, up to the time of Jawaharlal Nehru's recent imprisonment for four years—his eighth term. It is not, however, "Volume 2" of the "Autobiography." The two books differ in many important respects, and yet this volume shares with the "Autobiography" the outstanding qualities of powerful writing, historical perspective, consistency of thought and sense of social reality.

The "Autobiography" was written in the enforced solitude of the prison, often at long stretches. It was always intended for publication in book form. "The Unity of India," however, is a selection from Jawaharlal Nehru's writings and Press statements on diverse topics, during the five-year interval between his last imprisonment and the present. They were originally mostly written in the crowded compartments of Indian third-class railway carriages, in the intervals between great meetings or important Congress Committees, often in the small hours of the morning after a whole day of political campaigning or grave discussion. Some of them, were written abroad—in Europe and China. They deal with issues and developments which called for Jawaharlal Nehru's guidance or comment on the occasion itself; but his treatment of the problems has given us much that is history, expressed with directness and simplicity, yet with great foresight and imagination. Jawaharlal Nehru's pen has endowed them with a sense of living reality and much personal and human interest.

On Indian affairs he is dealing with events in the fashioning of which he plays such a unique rôle. This explains why these pages sometimes border on autobiography. Equally they form a history of events as seen, not merely from the outside, but enriched by the intimate knowledge of the vital currents that move events.

On world affairs, much of what Jawaharlal Nehru strove for during this period, his warnings, his fears, his championship of causes and his opposition to policies, has been conclusively, if tragically, justified by the events of recent years. What he wrote and said was his response to the expectations of guidance and leadership, which the problems rendered imperative.

It is functional writing; his word-pictures proclaim the great social urges and aspirations, the constructive discontent and the vital rebellion that is so much of Jawaharlal Nehru—and modern India.

But neither the stern reality of his subject-matter, the fierceness of controversies, nor his intensity of purpose, eclipses the sensitivity and the generous instincts which endear Jawaharlal Nehru to all who know him. There are comments on political colleagues, castigations of opponents and estimates of his own judg-



ments. These are probably some of the best parts of this book; they reveal his generosity to friends and opponents, and the constant vigilance to which he subjects himself.

"The Unity of India" is not a "Nehru Scrap Book". Running through its pages is a consistency that is a reassuring guide to friends and colleagues and a warning to opponents and critics. This applies in a remarkable degree to the outstanding controversies of Indian politics today. It should help those who are prone to think that Jawaharlal Nehru can be cajoled or coerced, or that the movement of Indian awakening can be diverted from its basic purposes, to discover their tragic errors. Such a discovery would be the beginning of an understanding of renaissance India. Perhaps this book and the wisdom it reveals may be of service in that direction.

Jawaharlal Nehru entrusted to me the task of making the necessary selection of his writings and of putting them together for the publishers. I have had no opportunity of consulting him about the form of this book, nor has he seen any of its proofs. Correspondence between us has been restricted for a number of reasons, and my hopes that I should be able to obtain his approval of the final form of the book have proved vain on account of his imprisonment. I hope, however, that he will see a copy of this book some time—in prison or outside.

I have also added, at the request of the publishers, a number of footnotes, notes, and other appendices to make the text more easily understood by those whose knowledge of Indian affairs is limited. Some of these are extracts from documents or similar material, some are notes compiled for the purposes of this book. These are incorporated here without consultation with the author, who, more generously than wisely, trusted my discretion. For all errors and shortcomings, for the selection and arrangement of material, for the interpretation of facts and events, and for opinions, if any, expressed in the notes or footnotes, I am alone responsible.

The author and the publishers desire me to record their grateful thanks to Messrs. Kitabistan, Allahabad, who published some of these writings in India at different times; to *Foreign Affairs* (U.S.A.) for "The Unity of India", to *The Atlantic Monthly* for "India's Demand and England's Answer".

To Jawaharlal Nehru, I am deeply grateful for his generous confidence, and on his behalf and my own I should like to thank Mr. Carlisle of Lindsay Drummond, Ltd., who has laboured arduously in the production of this book, and my friend Miss Marjorie Nicholson, B.A. (Oxon), whose knowledge of Indian problems and research into them have greatly assisted me in the preparation of the notes.

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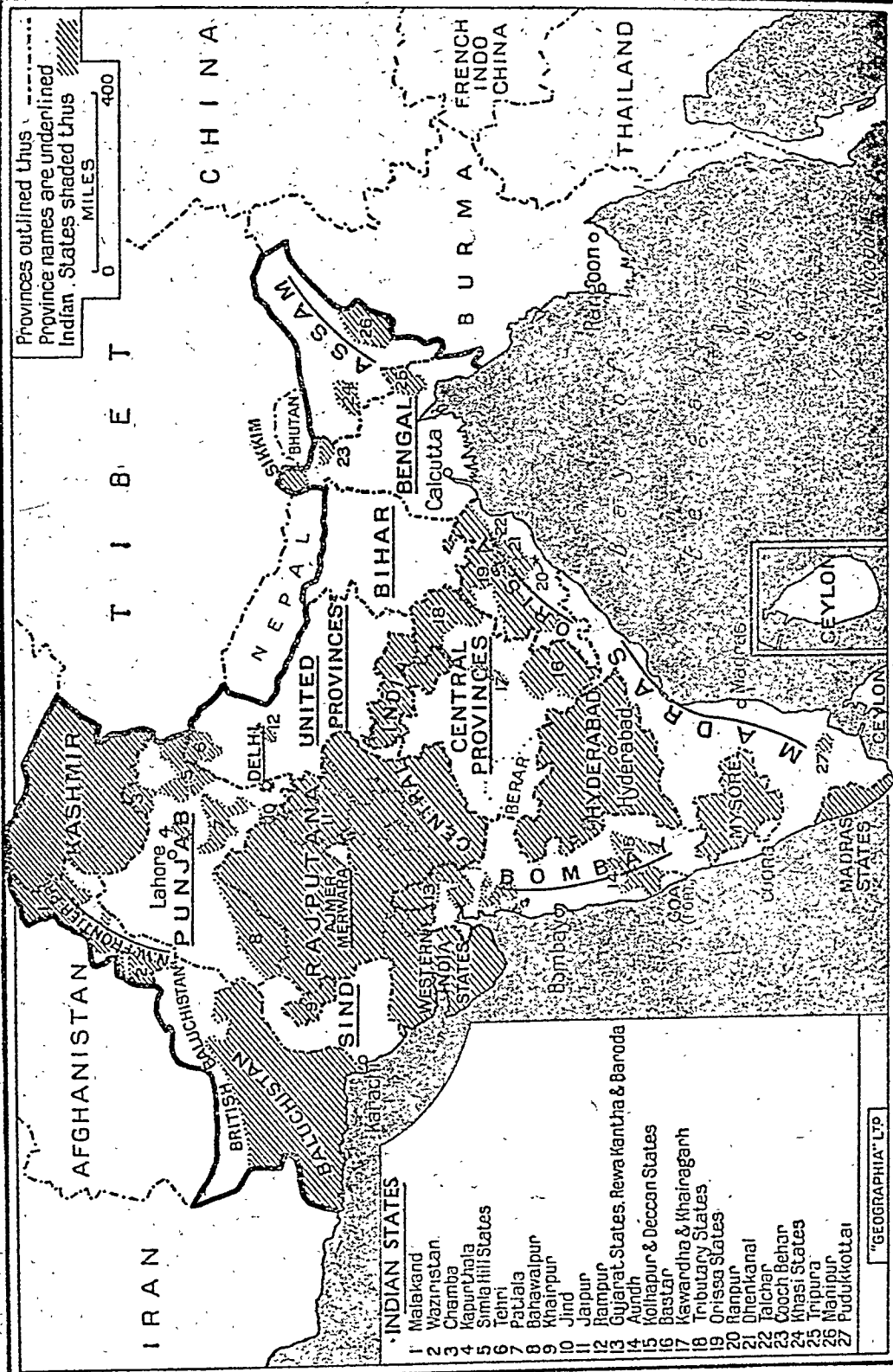
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PART ONE  
*INDIA AND THE STATES*



## I

### *The Unity of India*<sup>1</sup>

Most Americans, bred in the democratic tradition, sympathize with India's struggle for freedom. They dislike empire and imperialism and the domination and exploitation of one nation by another. And yet they are perplexed when they consider the Indian problem, wondering whether it is possible to build a united and progressive nation out of the seemingly infinite diversity that makes up the fabric of Indian life. They have heard so much of the separatist elements, of the conflicts of religion and culture, of the variety of languages, of the mediæval conditions in the semi-feudal regions of the Indian States, of social cleavages, of the general backwardness of Indian life, that doubts assail them whether it is possible to harmonize all these in a free and independent India. Can democracy be built upon such insecure foundations? Could India stand together and free, if British rule were withdrawn?

These hesitations and perplexities are natural. The questions in which they originate must be considered by us dispassionately, and we must attempt to find the right answers. Freedom for a nation and a people may be, and is, I believe, always good in the long run; but in the final analysis freedom itself is a means to an end, that end being the raising of the people in question to higher levels and hence the general advancement of humanity. The vital and most important problem that faces us in India is the appalling poverty of the people. Will political independence help us to diminish this, as well as the numerous ills that flow from it?

It is well to remember that the British have been in effective control of India for more than a hundred and fifty years and that during this period they have had

<sup>1</sup> This essay originally appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, U.S.A.

almost complete freedom to act in any manner they chose. No democratic or any other kind of control in fact existed, the British Parliament being too far away and too ignorant to intervene. India was, and is, a rich country, rich in agricultural resources, mineral wealth, human material; only her people are poor. It was indeed the wealth of India that attracted hordes of foreign adventurers to her shores. With these resources and that human material, and following a century and a half of unchecked despotism, one is entitled to ask for substantial results. During this period Europe has changed out of recognition, Japan has transformed herself with amazing speed, America has become the wealthiest country in the world. But in India we still have grinding poverty, widespread illiteracy, a general absence of sanitation and medical relief—a lack, indeed, of all the good things of life. There are undoubtedly some good works which have followed British rule, notably in the field of irrigation. But how little they are compared to what might have been!

It is idle to blame the Indian people for this when those people have been allowed no say in the matter. The very backwardness of a people is a condemnation of its government. With this patent result of British rule in India, little argument is needed to demonstrate its failure. But even admitting the failure, it is true that our present problems are no nearer solution. It nevertheless is well to bear the fact in mind, for the very structure of British imperialist rule has been, and is, such as to aggravate our problems and not to solve any of them. And because these problems insistently demand solution we have to look for it outside the orbit of the British Empire.

India is smaller than the United States of America, yet it is a vast country and its population is far larger than that of the United States. Our problems therefore are continental. They are unlike those of the small countries of Europe. Till the advent of modern communications and modern methods of transport, it was very difficult for such a vast area to hold together politically for long. The United States grew and developed into a powerful

unit, despite the vast area involved, because of the increase in transport and communications. If the United States had had a long history, going back hundreds and thousands of years before modern science and industry revolutionized life, probably the country would have been split up into many small national units, as happened in Europe. The fact that India was split up politically in the course of her long history was inevitable under the conditions then existing. Yet always the idea of the political unity of India persisted, and kings and emperors sought to realize it. Asoka indeed achieved unity two thousand years ago and built up an empire far greater than that of Britain in India today. It stretched right into Central Asia and included Afghanistan. Only a small part in South India remained outside, and this because of the horror of war and bloodshed that came over Asoka in the full flood of victory and conquest. Other rulers in the past tried to achieve the political unification of India and succeeded in some measure. But this desire for a unified political control of the whole country could not be realized in view of the lack of means and machinery. The coming of the British to India synchronized with the development in transport, communications and modern industry, and so it was that British rule succeeded at last in establishing political unity.

The desire for political unity, in India as in other countries before the advent of nationalism, was usually the desire of the ruler or the conqueror and not of the people as a whole. In India, where for long ages there had been a large measure of local self-government, the people were far more interested in their local freedom and rights than in the machinery of government at the top. Kings changed at the top, but the newcomers respected local rights and did not interfere with them. Because of this, conflicts between kings and people did not take place as in Europe; and later, under cover of this, kings gradually built up their autocratic power.

An all-India political unity thus was not possible in the past. What is far more important for us is to see what



other more basic unifying or separatist features there were in Indian life. This will help us to understand the present and shape the future. Superficial observers of India, accustomed to the standardization which modern industry has brought about in the West, are apt to be impressed too much by the variety and diversity of India. They miss the unity of India; and yet the tremendous and fundamental fact of India is her essential unity throughout the ages. Indian history runs into thousands of years, and, of all modern nations, only China has such a continuous and ancient background of culture. Five to six thousand years ago the Indus Valley civilization flourished all over northern India and probably extended to the south also. Even then it was something highly developed, with millennia of growth behind it. Since that early dawn of history innumerable peoples, conquerors and settlers, pilgrims and students, have trekked into the Indian plains from the highlands of Asia and have influenced Indian life and culture and art; but always they have been absorbed and assimilated. India was changed by these contacts and yet she remained essentially her own old self. Like the ocean she received the tribute of a thousand rivers, and though she was disturbed often enough, and storms raged over the surface of her waters, the sea continued to be the sea. It is astonishing to note how India continued successfully this process of assimilation and adaptation. It could only have done so if the idea of a fundamental unity were so deep-rooted as to be accepted even by the newcomer, and if her culture were flexible and adaptable to changing conditions.

Vincent Smith, in his "Oxford History of India,"<sup>1</sup> refers to what I have in mind: "India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners, and sect." And Sir Frederick Whyte, in "The Future of East and West," also stresses this unity.

<sup>1</sup> Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919.

He refers to the tremendous diversity of India and yet "the greatest of all the contradictions in India is that over this diversity is spread a greater unity, which is not immediately evident because it failed historically to find expression in any political cohesion to make the country one, but which is so greatly a reality, and so powerful, that even the Musulman world in India has to confess that it has been deeply affected by coming within its influence."<sup>1</sup>

This Indian background and unity were essentially cultural; they were not religious in the narrow sense of the word. That culture was not exclusive or intolerant to begin with; it was receptive and adaptable, and long ages of pre-eminence gave it deep roots and a solidarity which storms could not shake. It developed a beneficent attitude which, secure in its own strength, could afford to be tolerant and broadminded. And this very toleration gave it greater strength and adaptability. There was in it till almost the beginning of the Christian era a certain rationalism, something approaching a scientific outlook, which refused to tie itself down to dogmas. True, this culture and rationalism were largely confined to the upper classes, but they percolated down to the masses to some extent. Superstitions and dogmas and many an evil practice gradually crept in. Buddhism was a revolt against these. But the old way of life was still powerful, and it is one of the wonders of history how India succeeded in absorbing Buddhism without any physical conflict. Buddhism, which had spread throughout India and had made progress from Western Asia right across Central Asia to the Far East, gradually faded out of the land of its birth. The man who is supposed to be largely responsible for this was Shankaracharya, who lived in the eighth century after Christ. This amazingly brilliant young man travelled all over India arguing, debating, convincing large audiences, and in a few years (he died at the age of 32) changed the mental atmosphere of the country. The appeal was to reason and logic, not to force.

<sup>1</sup> London: Sidgwick, 1932.

This practice of debate and conference over religious and other matters was common throughout India and there are records of many great gatherings from Kashmir in the north to the far south. Whatever the political divisions of the country, ideas spread rapidly and were hotly debated. India hung together culturally and the mental background of the people everywhere was much the same. Even the masses in different parts of the country were not dissimilar in thought and outlook. The chief places of pilgrimage fixed by Shankaracharya were situated at the four corners of India: Badrinath in the Himalayas in the north, Rameshwaram near Cape Comorin in the south, Dwarka in the west overlooking the Arabian Sea, and Puri in the east, washed by the waters of the Bay of Bengal. There was continuous intercourse between the peoples of the different regions. India as a whole was their holy land.

It is interesting to compare the intolerance of Europe in matters religious to the wide tolerance prevailing almost throughout history in India. Christianity came to India in the first century after Christ, long before Europe knew much about it, and found a welcome and a home. There was no opposition whatever. Even now there flourish in India many early Christian sects which were crushed out of existence in Europe. There are the Nestorians, and various Syrian Christian sects. The Jews came to India also about eighteen hundred years ago<sup>1</sup> or more, and were welcomed. They still carry on their community life and parts of an ancient city where they live are supposed to resemble old Jerusalem. The Zoroastrians also came to India, driven out of Persia, and made their home here, and have flourished ever since. The Moslems first came soon after the advent of Islam and they found ready admittance and welcome and full opportunities for pro-

<sup>1</sup> The Jews in India are descended from arrivals in the country at different periods. The most ancient Jewish families claim descent from twelve Jewish families that are said to have been shipwrecked on the Indian coast in the fourth century before the Christian era.

pagating their faith. For centuries there was no conflict except on the frontiers; it was only when Moslems came as conquerors and raiders that there was conflict.

The coming of Moslem rule shook India. For a while there was a conflict between the old background and the new, but soon the old spirit of India began to assert itself and attempts began to be made to find a synthesis of the old and the new. Even in religion, most difficult subject of all, this attempt was repeatedly made by Nanak,<sup>1</sup> Kabir and others. The Moslem rulers generally accepted the background of Indian life and culture, varied by Persian cultural ideas. There was no difficulty whatever in the adaptation of old Indian arts to new ideas. New styles grew up in architecture and painting which were a true synthesis of the two and yet were essentially Indian. So also in music. Even in dress a certain uniformity crept in, and a common language developed.

Thus the whole history of India for thousands of years past shows her essential unity and the vitality and adaptability of her culture. This vitality took her message in art and thought and religion to the Far East; it took the shape of great colonizing expeditions to Malaysia, to Java and Sumatra and the Philippines and Borneo, as the remains of great monuments there, a thousand years old, bear testimony.

Behind this cultural unity, and giving strength to it, was the ceaseless attempt to find a harmony between the inner man and his outer environment. To some extent this was the outlook of the Middle Ages in Europe. And yet it probably was something more. The profit motive was not so obvious and riches were not valued in the same way as elsewhere. Unlike as in Europe, honour was reserved for the man of intellect and the man who served the state or society, and the great soldier or the rich man took second and third place. Perhaps it was this want of stress on the outer environment that made India politically weak and backward, while external progress went forward so rapidly in the West.

<sup>1</sup> Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion.

This past record of Indian cultural solidarity does not necessarily help us today. It is present conditions that we have to deal with, and memories of what has been may be of little avail. But though that is perfectly true, yet an ancient people has deep roots in the past and we cannot ignore them. Both the good and the bad that we possess have sprung from those roots; they give us strength and inspiration; they also burden us and tie us down to many a harmful tradition and evil practice. India undoubtedly deteriorated and the vital urge in her began to weaken. Her power to assimilate and absorb became feebler, and the flexibility of her thought and structure gave place to rigidity. What was dynamic became more and more static. The rationalism and the scientific basis of her thought continued for a favoured few, but for others irrationalism and superstition held sway. Caste, which was a division of society by occupation, and which at the start was far from rigid, developed a fearful rigidity and became the citadel of social reaction and a basis for the exploitation of the masses. For a long time India stagnated, the strength had gone out of her, and it was inevitable that she should fall an easy prey to the better-equipped and more vital and technically advanced nations of the West.

The immediate result of this was the growth of conservatism, a further shrinking of India inside her shell in self-defence. British rule forwarded this process by crystallizing many a changing custom and giving it the force of law. Even more important in keeping India back was the economic structure which British rule built up. The feudal Indian State system, the gilded Maharajas and Nabobs, and the big landlord system are essentially British creations in India. We have them, to our misfortune, still with us. But this desire of the British rulers to keep a semi-feudal structure in India could not hold back the impact of new ideas and new conditions. The British themselves thrived in the East on the strength of the great impulse given to the world by the advent of industrialism, and India herself was inevitably affected by

this impulse. For their own purposes and in order to entrench themselves, they built railways and the other accompaniments of a modern administration. They tried hard to stop the industrial growth of India, desiring to keep her as a producer of raw materials only and a consumer of British manufactured goods.<sup>1</sup> But the industrial revolution had to spread to India, even though it came slowly because of the obstruction offered by the Government.

The British gave political unity to India. This had now become possible owing to the development of communications and transport. It was a unity of a common subjection, but it gave rise to the unity of common nationalism. The idea of a united and a free India gripped the people. It was not a superficial idea imposed from above, but the natural outcome of that fundamental unity which had been the background of Indian life for thousands of years. The difference that had crept in was the new emphasis on the political aspect. To combat this, the British Government tried to lay stress on the religious differences and adopted a policy which encouraged them and brought them into conflict with each other. It has had a measure of success, but nationalism, in India as in other countries of the East, is the dominant urge of the time and must triumph. This nationalism is being tempered today by the economic urge, but this is still further removed from the mediæval outlook which thinks in terms of religious groupings in political affairs.

The growth of the powerful nationalist movement in India, represented by the National Congress, has demonstrated the political unity of India. The last two decades have seen vast upheavals, in the nature of a peaceful rebellion, taking place throughout the length and breadth of the country and shaking the foundations of British rule. This voluntary organization, commanding the willing allegiance of millions, has played a great rôle in fixing the idea of Indian unity in the minds of our masses.

<sup>1</sup> This is still the essence of British policy in relation to industrial development in spite of the exigencies of the war.

The capacity for united action and disciplined sacrifice for a national ideal which the people have shown has demonstrated not only the probability of Indian unity but its actual existence. In India today no one, whatever his political views or religious persuasions, thinks in terms other than those of national unity.

There are differences, of course, and certain separatist tendencies, but even these do not oppose national freedom or unity.<sup>1</sup> They seek to gain a special favour for their particular group and because of this they hinder sometimes the growth of the nationalist movement. Religious differences affect politics less and less, though still sometimes they distract attention. There is no religious or cultural conflict in India. What is called the religious or communal problem is really a dispute among upper-class people for a division of the spoils of office or of representation in a legislature. This will surely be settled amicably wherever it arises.

Language is alleged to divide India into innumerable compartments; we are told by the census that there are 222 languages or dialects in India. I suppose the census of the United States mentions a very large number of languages; the German census, I think, mentions over sixty. But most of these languages are spoken by small groups of people, or are dialects. In India, the absence of mass education has fostered the growth of dialects. As a matter of fact, India is a singularly unified area so far as languages are concerned. Altogether in the vast area of India there are a dozen languages and these are closely allied to each other. They fall into two groups—the Indo-Aryan languages of the north and centre and west, and the Dravidian languages of the east and south. The Indo-Aryan languages derive from Sanskrit and anyone who knows one of them finds it easy to learn another. The Dravidian languages are different, but each one of them

<sup>1</sup> At the time this was written the object of the Moslem League was the national independence of India. It has now (1941) adopted the division of India (pakisthan) which, however, is repudiated by the overwhelming majority of Moslems.

contains fifty per cent. or more words from the Sanskrit. The dominant language in India is Hindustani (Hindi or Urdu) which is already spoken by a huge block of a hundred and twenty million people and is partly understood by scores of millions of others. This language is bound to become the all-India medium of communication, not displacing the great provincial languages, but as a compulsory second language. With mass education on behalf of the state this will not be difficult. Already due to talkies and the radio the range of Hindustani is spreading fast. The writer of this article has had occasion to address great mass audiences all over India and almost always, except in the south, he has used Hindustani and been understood. However numerous the difficult problems which India has to solve, the language problem clearly is not one of them. It is already well on the way to solution.

It will thus be seen that the forces working for Indian unity are formidable and overwhelming, and it is difficult to conceive of any separatist tendency which can break up this unity. Some of the major Indian princes might represent such a tendency; but they flourish not from their own inherent strength, but because of the support of the British power. When that support goes, they will have to surrender to the wishes of their own people, among whom the sentiment of national unity is widespread.

This does not mean that our problems are easy of solution. They are very difficult, as every major problem in the world today is difficult, and probably their solution will depend on international as well as on national factors. But the real problems of India, as of the rest of the world, are economic, and they are so interrelated that it is hardly possible to tackle them separately. The land problem is the outstanding question of India, and it is difficult to see any final solution of it without revolutionary changes in our agriculture and land system. Feudal relics and the big landlord system are hindrances to development and will have to go. The tiny holdings, averaging a fraction of an acre per person, are uneconomic and wasteful and



too small for the application of scientific methods of agriculture. Large-scale state and collective or coöperative farms must be established instead, and this cannot be done so long as the vested interests in land are not removed. Even when this has been done the vast urban and rural unemployment will not be reduced. For that as well as for other obvious reasons we must push forward the industrialization of the country. This again requires the development of social services—education, sanitation, etc. And so the problem becomes a vast and many-sided one affecting land, industry and all departments of life, and we see that it can be tackled only on a nationally planned basis without vested interests to obstruct the planning. Therefore many of us think that a socialist structure is necessary, that in no other way can such planning be organized and pushed through.

But then the vested interests come in—here lies the real difficulty and the real conflict. Far the greatest of these is the City of London, representing British finance and industry. The Government of India is but its shadow when vital interests are concerned. In addition there are the imperial services and Indian vested interests, the princes and others. The new Constitution of India,<sup>1</sup> though giving a certain leverage in the provinces owing to the extension of the electorate, is essentially designed to protect these special interests and keep British imperialism in India intact. Even in the provinces real power rests with the Governors and the revenues are largely mortgaged to these interests. Such strength as there is behind the provincial governments comes far more from the organized national movement than from the Constitution Act. Fear of conflict with this movement, resulting possibly in the suspension of the Constitution, prevents too much

<sup>1</sup> The Constitution is embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, passed by the British Parliament. It does not carry the consent of the Indian people and was imposed on India in the face of national opposition. The Constitution has become operative only in the provinces. The introduction of the Federal Central structure with its highly objectionable features has been successfully resisted by the Indian national movement up till now.

interference with the provincial governments.<sup>1</sup> But the position is essentially unstable; conflicts are inherent in it. Besides, under the financial provisions and reservations really big schemes of social reform simply cannot be undertaken.

But by far the worst part of the Constitution is the proposed Federal structure, for it makes the feudal Indian States permanent and, in addition, gives them some power to interfere in the affairs of the rest of India. The whole conception of a union of imperialism, feudalism and democracy is incapable of realization and can only mean the entrenchment of all the reactionary elements. It must be remembered that the Indian State system is over a hundred years old and that during this century it has continued more or less unchanged. In this period Europe and the world have altered past recognition, and it is a monstrous imposition on us that we should be saddled permanently with feudal relics which prevent all growth. Hence the fierce opposition to the Federal structure and the Constitution Act as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

The National Congress stands for independence and a democratic state. It has proposed that the constitution of a free India must be framed, without outside interference, by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of an adult franchise. That is the democratic way and there is no other way short of revolution which can bring the needed result. An Assembly so elected will represent the people as a whole and will be far more interested in the economic and social problems of the masses than in the petty communal issues which affect small groups. Thus it will solve without much difficulty the communal and other like problems. It will not solve so easily the economic problems, but the clash of interest there is similar to that found all over the world. In the world-wide conflict of

<sup>1</sup> The provinces were (from October, 1939) ruled automatically by Governors through officials. Most of the former ministers are now (1941) in prison!

<sup>2</sup> The Federal structure never became operative and may be now regarded as dead.

ideas and politics, India stands for democracy and against Fascism and the totalitarian state. She stands for peace and coöperation between nations and ultimately the building up of a world order.

Will an independent India be strong enough to protect herself from outside aggression and invasion? If India is strong enough to gain her freedom from British imperialism, which has so long been entrenched on her soil, it seems to follow that she will also be strong enough to resist fresh aggression. The strength of a nation is a relative affair, depending on a host of internal and external factors. Most independent countries today are not strong enough to stop by themselves the aggression of a Great Power. Even a Great Power might succumb to a combination of other Great Powers. Probably the United States is the only country so fortunately situated and so strong in every way as to be able to hope to resist successfully almost any hostile combination. The others rely for their independence partly on their own strength, but more so on a combination of circumstances.

India will, of course, take all necessary steps to strengthen her defences. For this she has the industrial and other necessary resources. Her policy will be one of friendship to her neighbours and others, and she will rigorously avoid conflict. The National Congress has already declared that in the event of Britain being involved in an imperialist war, India will not be a party to it. There is no doubt that India can build up a strong defence apparatus. Her army today, though lacking in Indian officers, is considered an efficient force.

Who might be the aggressor against India? It is hardly likely that any European nation will embark on so rash an adventure, for each country in Europe fears its European neighbour. Soviet Russia is definitely out of the picture so far as aggression goes; she seeks a policy of international peace, and the acquisition of Indian territory would fulfil no want of hers. Afghanistan and the border tribes also need not be considered in this connection. Our policy towards them will be one of close

friendship and coöperation, utterly unlike the "Forward Policy" of the British, which relies on bombing combatants and non-combatants alike. But even if these peoples were hostile and aggressive they are too backward industrially to meet a modern army outside their own mountains.

Japan is mentioned as a possible aggressor. It is said that militarists in Japan dream of Asiatic and even world dominion. Perhaps so. But before they can approach India they will have to crush and absorb the whole of China, an undertaking which most people think is utterly beyond their capacity, and one which will involve at some stage a conflict with other Great Powers. How can Japan come to India? Not overland. Deserts and the Himalayas offer an effective barrier, and not even air fleets can come that way. By sea the route is long and intricate and full of danger in the narrow straits that have to be passed. A Japanese invasion of India could become a practical proposition only if China has been completely crushed, and if the United States, the Soviet Union and England have all been effectively humbled. That is a large undertaking.

Thus we see that, normally speaking, there is no great or obvious danger of the invasion of India from without. Still, we live in an abnormal world, full of wars and aggression. International law has ceased to be, treaties and undertakings have no value, gangsterism prevails unabashed among the nations. We realize that anything may happen in this epoch of revolution and wars, and that the only thing to be done to protect ourselves is to rely on our own strength at the same time that we pursue consciously a policy of peace. Risks have to be taken whatever the path we follow. These we are prepared to take, for we must.

We do not underestimate the difficulties before us. We have a hard task, hard because of external opposition, harder still because of our own weaknesses. It is always more difficult to fight one's own failings than the power of an adversary. We have to do both. We have social

evils, with the authority of long tradition and habit behind them. We have within us the elements which have gone to build up Fascism in other countries. We have inertia and a tame submission to fate and its decrees. But we have also a new awakening of the vital spirit of India. The static uncreative period is over; a hunger for change and for the ending of misery and poverty has seized the masses. The world is shaken by war and alarms of war. No one knows what horror and inhuman cruelty and destruction—or human progress—the future holds for us. Be that as it may, India will no longer be merely a passive instrument of destiny or of another's will.

In the subconscious mind of India there is questioning, a struggle, a crisis. As of old, India seeks a synthesis of the past and the present, of the old and the new. She sees the new industrial civilization marching irresistibly on; she distrusts it and dislikes it to some extent, for it is an attack against and an upheaval of so much that is old; yet she has accepted that industrial civilization as an inevitable development. So she seeks to synthesize it with her own fundamental conceptions, to find a harmony between the inner man and his ever-changing outer environment. That harmony is strangely lacking in the whole world today. All of us seek it blindly. Till we find it we shall have to march wearily through the deserts of conflict and hatred and mutual destruction.

January, 1938.

*The Indian States*

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

AT THE ALL-INDIA STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE  
FEBRUARY, 1939, LUDHIANA

COMRADES,

Year after year this Conference of the people of the Indian States has met in session and discussed the problems of the States. Year after year it has raised its voice in condemnation of the autocracy and misrule, the corruption and the degradation that have prevailed in many of these States. The labours of this Conference, and far more so of the National Congress, have borne fruit, and today there is a mighty awakening among the people of the States. When, in after years, the history of India comes to be written, the year 1938 will stand out as the year of this awakening. The historian of that distant future will not wonder at this awakening; but he will marvel that the millions who inhabit the Indian States submitted for generations to intolerable and appalling conditions, and that a system of government which had long vanished in other parts of the world still continued in India.

The year 1938 has become history, and we stand on the threshold of 1939. The movement for freedom gathers pace, and the whole of India looks with sympathy and understanding on this great struggle in the States. At this vital moment you have summoned me to this Conference, and I have gladly come at your bidding. I come to you not only because I am intensely interested in the freedom of the people of the States, but as the bearer of the goodwill of the rest of India and as a pledge of our solidarity.

Many people have in past years criticized the attitude of the National Congress towards the States, and heated

argument has taken place about intervention and non-intervention. That criticism and argument have perished with the yesterday that has gone and are meaningless today. Yet it is worth while to consider briefly the development of Congress policy in regard to the States. I have not always approved of all the expressions of this policy or liked the emphasis on certain aspects of the problem. But I am convinced that this fundamental policy was the correct one under the circumstances, and, indeed, subsequent events have justified it completely. A policy aiming at vital change or revolution must keep in touch with reality and the conditions that prevail. As these conditions change, that policy changes. Brave words and gestures or strongly worded resolutions, out of touch with objective conditions, do not bring about that pregnant atmosphere out of which revolutionary change is born. Nor can that condition be created artificially or mass movements launched unless the masses themselves are ready and prepared. The Congress realized this and knew of the unpreparedness of people in the States; it husbanded its energy in the struggle outside, well realizing that this was the most effective method of influencing the States' peoples and making them ready for their own struggle.

The Haripura resolution<sup>1</sup> was a landmark in the evolu-

<sup>1</sup> The session of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in 1938 passed a resolution on the Indian States which sought to declare Congress policy in regard to the States. This issue has been the subject of much internal controversy inside the Congress against the traditional view that the States were separate units and therefore not the concern of the national movement. The vast changes taking place in the world and the strides made by the national movement in recent years had led to a more realistic approach to the problem of the Indian States. Men like Pandit Nehru regarded India as one and indivisible; the peoples of India, whether they be in the States or the present British provinces, were all peoples of one country whose economic, social and political freedom the national movement was seeking to establish. The Haripura resolution reflects a degree of compromise, but at the same time it declared beyond doubt the unity of India and that the Independence for which the Congress stood was for the whole

tion of Congress policy, and it enunciated this in clear language. The integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for, and the same full measure of political, social, and economic freedom was to come to the States as to the rest of India. There could be no compromise on this, and the Congress declared afresh in favour of full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the States. Further, it declared to be its right and privilege to work for the attainment of these objectives in the States. There was no question of non-intervention; the Congress, as representing the will of the Indian people, recognizes no bars which limit its freedom of activity in any matter pertaining to India and her people. It is its right and privilege and its duty to intervene in any such matter whenever the interests of India demand it. Not to do so would be to deny its own function and to betray the cause which it seeks to represent.

But it is for the Congress and the people of India to determine when and where they will intervene and what policy they must pursue, so that their intervention might be effective and fruitful of results. The limitation, if any, is of its own making, or is caused by external circumstances which it is wise enough to recognize. No outside authority can limit the function of the Congress, just as no power or authority can set bounds to the aspirations or advancement of the Indian people.

The Congress knew well that the backwardness of the States hindered our national progress, and that there could be no freedom for India unless the States ceased to be what they were. The Congress was eager to bring about this essential and vital change, and yet it knew that

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of India. Congress welcomed and pledged support to the peoples' struggles in the States, while laying down that the States' movements should be built up by the States' peoples themselves, though Congressmen were free to take part in them. The net result of the Haripura resolution was to unify the States' peoples' struggles in one State peoples' movement, and further to unify it in close relationship and accord with the Indian National Congress.



the change could only come about from below, when the people of the States grew self-reliant and organized and capable of shouldering the burden of their struggle. It emphasized this. Not to have done so would have been to mislead and encourage vain delusion and delay the building up in the States themselves of organizations which would represent the strength and will of the people.

The wisdom of the Congress stands amply justified today when we see the developments that have taken place since Haripura. All the States are astir, and in many of them powerful mass movements are functioning. The people of the States are rapidly coming into line with the rest of India; they are no longer a burden and a dead-weight keeping us back. They are setting the pace for India today, and our national politics are dominated by their struggle. The time has come, therefore, for the integration of these various struggles in the States *inter se* and with the major struggle against British Imperialism. There are no longer many different struggles going on for independence; there is only one mighty struggle for India's freedom, though its aspects may vary and though its battle-grounds may be many. As Gandhiji has said, the struggle for liberty, whenever it takes place, is a struggle for all India.

It is in the fitness of things that, at this moment of vital crisis for the States, India's leader, ever thinking of her freedom and jealous of her honour, should step out and in his ringing voice of old, that we remember so well, give faith and courage to our people. Gandhiji's lead has finally settled all the old arguments that obscured the issue, and that issue stands out now, clear and definite.

There are about six hundred States in India—big ones and small ones and tiny ones which one cannot even place on the map. They differ greatly among themselves, and some have advanced industrially and educationally, and some have had competent Rulers or Ministers. The majority of them, however, are sinks of reaction and incompetence and unrestrained autocratic power, some-

times exercised by vicious and degraded individuals. But whether the Ruler happens to be good or bad, or his Ministers competent or incompetent, the evil lies in the system. This system has vanished from the rest of the world, and, left to itself, it would have vanished from India also long ago. But in spite of its manifest decay and stagnation, it has been propped up and artificially maintained by British Imperialism. Offspring of the British Power in India, suckled by imperialism for its own purposes, it has survived till today, though mighty revolutions have shaken the world and changed it, empires have collapsed, and crowds of princes and petty rulers have faded away. That system has no inherent importance or strength; it is the strength of British Imperialism that counts. For us in India that system has in reality been one of the faces of imperialism. Therefore, when conflict comes we must recognize who our opponent is.

We are told now of the so-called independence of the States and of their treaties with the Paramount Power, which are sacrosanct and inviolable and apparently must go on for ever and ever. We have recently seen what happens to international treaties and the most sacred of covenants when they do not suit the purposes of imperialism. We have seen these treaties torn up, friends and allies basely deserted and betrayed, and the pledged word broken by England and France. Democracy and freedom were the sufferers and so it did not matter. But when reaction and autocracy and imperialism stand to lose, it does matter, and treaties, however moth-eaten and harmful to the people they might be, have to be preserved. It is a monstrous imposition to be asked to put up with these treaties of a century and a quarter ago, in the making of which the people had no voice or say. It is fantastic to expect the people to keep on their chains of slavery, imposed upon them by force and fraud, and to submit to a system which crushes the life-blood out of them. We recognize no such treaties and we shall in no event accept them. The only final authority and para-

mount power that we recognize is the will of the people, and the only thing that counts ultimately is the good of the people.

A new theory of the independence of the States has been advanced in recent years, and it has been advanced by the very Power that holds them in an iron grip and keeps them in subjection. Neither history nor constitutional law gives any justification for this, and, if we examine the origins of these States, most of their rulers would be reduced to the status of feudal barons. But we need not trouble ourselves with legal research, as the practice and facts are plain enough. This practice has been for the British Power to dominate these states completely, and its slightest gesture is a command to them, which they disobey at their peril. The Political Department of the Government of India pulls the strings, and the puppets dance to its tune; the local Resident is the master of the situation; and latterly the practice has grown of British officials being imposed as Ministers of the Rulers of the States. If this is independence, then it will be interesting to learn how it differs from the most abject subjection.

There is no independence in the States and there is going to be none, for it is hardly possible geographically, and it is entirely opposed to the conception of a united free India. It is conceivable and desirable in the case of the larger States for them to have a great deal of autonomy within the framework of an Indian federation. But they will have to remain integral parts of India, and the major matters of common concern must be controlled by a democratic federal centre. Internally they will have responsible government.

It is clear that the problem of the States would be easy of solution if the conflict was confined to the people and the Ruler. Many of the Rulers, left to themselves, would ultimately line themselves with the people, and, if they hesitated to do so, the pressure from below would soon induce them to change their minds. Not to do so would imperil their position, and the only alternative would be

complete removal. The Congress and the various Praja Mandals have so far made every effort to induce the Rulers to side with their people and establish responsible government. They must realize that for them not to agree to do so will not stop the coming of freedom to their people; their opposition will only place an insurmountable barrier between them and their people, and an arrangement between the two will then become exceedingly difficult. The map of the world has changed many times during the last hundred years; empires have ceased to be and new countries have arisen. Even now before our very eyes we see this map changing. It requires no prophet to say with confidence that the Indian States system is doomed, even as the British Empire, which has so long protected it, is doomed. It is the path of prudence as well as of wisdom for the Rulers to line themselves with their people and be sharers with them in the new freedom, and, instead of being despotic and disliked rulers, with a precarious tenure, to be proud and equal citizens of a great commonwealth.

A few of the Rulers of the States have realized this and have taken some steps in the right direction. One of them, the Raja of Aundh, Chief of a small State, has distinguished himself by his wisdom in granting responsible government to his people, and is doing so with grace and goodwill.

But, unhappily, most of them stick to their old ways and show no signs of change. They demonstrate afresh the lesson of history that when a class has fulfilled its purpose and the world has no need of it, it decays and loses wisdom and all capacity. It cannot adapt itself to changing conditions. In a vain attempt to hold on to what is fading away, it loses even what little it might have retained. The British ruling classes have had a long and prosperous career, and throughout the nineteenth century and after they dominated the world. Yet today we see them nerveless, witless, incapable of consecutive thought or action, and, in a frantic attempt to hold on to some vested interests, ruining their great position in the

world and shattering the proud edifice of their empire. It is ever so with classes that have fulfilled their function and outlived their utility. If the British ruling classes are manifestly failing, in spite of their prestige and tradition and training, what shall we say of our Indian Princes, who for generations past have grown up in decadence and irresponsibility? The problems of government require something more than a knowledge of how to manage polo-ponies, or recognize the breeds of dogs, or have the skill to kill large numbers of inoffensive animals.

But even if the Rulers of the States were willing, their willingness would not take them far. For the master of their immediate destiny is the agent of the British Government, and they dare not offend him. We have seen in the case of Rajkot how a Ruler who was inclined to come to terms with his people was threatened with deposition, and how later he was made to break his word under pressure from British agents.

Thus the conflict in the States is only incidentally with the Rulers. In effect it is with British Imperialism. That is the issue, clear and definite. And that is why the interference of the British Power in the States against the people has a special significance. We see this interference on an increasing scale, not only by the Political Department of the Government of India and its many Agents and Residents, but through its armed forces, as in Orissa. This interference in order to crush the popular movement is no longer going to be tolerated by us. The National Congress will certainly intervene with full vigour if the Government of India intervene to crush the people. Our methods are different; they are peaceful, but they have been shown in the past to be effective.

Gandhiji has repeatedly warned the British Government and its agents in India of the far-reaching consequences of this conflict. It is manifestly impossible for the conflict to be confined to particular States and for the Congress, at the same time, to carry on provincial administrations involving a measure of co-operation with the British authorities. If there is this major conflict,

then its effects will spread to the remotest corners of India, and the question will no longer be a limited one of this State or that, but of the complete elimination of British power.

What is the nature of the conflict today? This must be clearly understood. It varies slightly from State to State, but the demand everywhere is for full responsible government. Yet the conflict is not at present to enforce that demand, but to establish the right of organizing people for that demand. When this right is denied and civil liberties are crushed, no way is left open to the people to carry on what are called constitutional methods of agitation. Their choice, then, is either to submit and give up all political and even public activity, and to suffer a degradation of the spirit and a continuation of the tyranny that oppresses them, or to resort to direct action. This direct action, according to our code, is perfectly peaceful satyagraha<sup>1</sup> and a refusal to submit to violence and evil, whatever the consequences. The immediate issue today is thus one of civil liberties in most of the States, though the objective everywhere is responsible government. In Jaipur the issue is, in a sense, still more limited, for the State Government objects to the Praja Mandal<sup>2</sup> organizing famine relief.

Members of the British Government, in justifying their international policy, tell us frequently of their love of peace and their horror of the methods of force and

<sup>1</sup> Satyagraha refers to the entire policy of struggle initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. He enunciates its twin basis as "truth and non-violence." Non-co-operation is part of Satyagraha; civil disobedience or any particular method is part of non-co-operation. Satyagraha necessarily includes other aspects of the Indian national struggle beyond those of resistance. These are often referred to as the "constructive programme." It follows from the character of the movement and the conception of Satyagraha that in all its aspects it must be independent, if not in opposition to the British power and authority in India.

<sup>2</sup> Praja Mandal literally means "association of subjects." It is one of the names of the organizations of peoples that have sprung up in the States.

violence in the solution of international or national problems. In the name of peace and appeasement they have helped and encouraged international blackmail and gangsterism of the worst type and done mortal injury to democracy and freedom in Europe. By their policy they have enthroned the rule of unabashed violence in Europe and been parties to the greatest tragedy of our time—the defeat of the Republic of Spain, which has fought so magnificently and so long against overwhelming odds. Yet these statesmen of Britain talk of the virtues of peaceful settlement and of the wickedness of force and violence. These pious sentiments are applied by them in Europe so that the forces of reaction and violence might have a free field and an ample opportunity to crush freedom.

What do we see in India, and especially in the States? All attempts by us at peaceful propaganda, peaceful organization, peaceful settlement are met by the brutal violence of the State authorities, backed by the armed might and political influence of the British Power. Thus where changes are sought, howsoever legitimately and peacefully, in the direction of democracy and freedom, all such attempts must be put down ruthlessly and with violence. But where changes are desired by Fascism and Imperialism in their own interests and in order to crush democracy and freedom, then violence and force are allowed full play, and the policy of peace is only meant to obstruct and hinder those who want to preserve their liberties.

Does anyone still hold that tyranny and autocracy and corrupt administration must continue in the States? Does anyone deny that all these must go and give place to free institutions? If so, how is this change to be brought about normally unless full opportunities are given for peaceful organization and the development of an intelligent and self-reliant public opinion? The full establishment of civil liberties is an essential preliminary to any progress. It is an insult to India to ask her to tolerate in the States Ordinance Rule and the suppression of organiza-

tions and prevention of public gatherings and methods usually associated with the gangster. Are the States to remain vast prisons where the human spirit is sought to be extinguished and the resources of the people are to be used for the pageantry and luxury of courts, while the masses starve and remain illiterate and backward? Are the Middle Ages to continue in India under the protection of British Imperialism?

In an important State in Rajputana even typewriters are discouraged, and there is an ordinance dealing with them and requiring their registration. In Kashmir a monstrous Ordinance,<sup>1</sup> framed on the lines of the Ordinance promulgated for the Burma rebellion some years ago, is the permanent law of the State. In the premier State of Hyderabad civil liberty has long been non-existent, and latterly accounts of brutal ill-treatment of peaceful satyagrahis have seen the light of day. The recent expulsion of hundreds of students from the Osmania University for the offence of singing *Bande Mataram*<sup>2</sup> privately is an astound-

<sup>1</sup> Notification No. 19-L. Originally issued on September 24, 1931, to direct the course of Martial Law in Srinagar and other places. It was withdrawn on October 5, 1931, and promulgated again on June 1, 1933. Hundreds of arrests were made under this Notification during the first two civil disobedience agitations and during 1938. The Notification provides for: Arrest of suspected persons without warrant; the taking over or destruction of property for the furtherance of operations being carried out by the military or police; the confiscation of weapons; the control of communications and telegraphs; a general right of search; collective fines; summary trial; etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Bande Mataram* is now the National Anthem of India. It was composed in the original Bengalee by the Bengalee poet, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, at the beginning of this century. It is a beautiful, mild and inoffensive song in salutation to the Motherland. Many thousands of people have gone to prison in the years that have passed since its composition for singing it. The British Government looked on it as "sedition." The British officials in India considered it highly offensive. The *Bande Mataram* is now sung everywhere, though British officials in India would neither honour nor respect it. In recent years, with legislatures controlled by the Congress recognizing it, there have been no arrests and less discourtesy from officials.



ing instance of the reactionary mentality which prevails in the governing circles of Hyderabad. In Travancore<sup>1</sup> the memory of the outrages of last summer is still fresh in our minds.

But I do not wish to make a list of these States and their misdeeds, nor do I wish to discuss the problems of individual States. If I attempted to do so this address of mine would never end. Here, where we meet, the Punjab States lie close to us, and many of them have had an unsavoury reputation. Their tale of misgovernment, if we heard it fully, would fill our time. But, apart from the difficulties of time and space, I would prefer that you concentrated your attention on the wider problem which embraces all the States, which is in effect the Indian State problem, rather than lose ourselves in the mazes of each separate problem. We must see the wood and not get lost in the trees. We must realize, and we must make others realize, that it is no longer possible to deal piecemeal with this great problem, for the freedom of India is one and indivisible.

But some States are in the forefront today in the struggle and they must be referred to. Some are peculiarly situated and require consideration.

Rajkot and Jaipur occupy the stage today and both of them raise issues of all-India importance. Many of our comrades are there, engaged in the heat of the struggle, and have been unable to join us in this Conference because of that more important engagement. Rajkot<sup>2</sup> has many

<sup>1</sup> Travancore is an Indian State, ruled by a Maharaja, in the extreme south-west of India. The people of the States through the Travancore States Congress have been engaged in an agitation for responsible government. Many arrests have been effected, and large numbers of men and women were imprisoned. Allegations of ill-treatment of prisoners in prisons and police vans, of beating up public workers in the streets and public places of assembly and other atrocities, have been made by responsible leaders of the Congress, including the president of the State Congress. A lathi charge on girl students aroused great indignation. Police lathi charges, arrests, and the prohibition of meetings were frequent occurrences in the year under reference.

<sup>2</sup> See note on p. 152 and p. 159.

lessons to teach us. After some months of conflict, it seemed that the people had won and we rejoiced. We saw how effectively the technique of our struggle and the peaceful and heroic sacrifice of the people brought success to us. But we had rejoiced too soon, and the plighted word of the Ruler was broken and the struggle had to begin afresh. All India knows how this happened and how British authority by pressure and threats came in the way of a settlement. From this we learn that we must never be misled by temporary success, we can never be sure of the triumph of our cause till achievement has come. Promises and assurances will not be kept, for the real power does not rest with those who make the promise. It rests with British Imperialism. In Jaipur there is an English official who, though appointed Prime Minister by the Maharaja, is the real ruler of State, and rules on behalf of and probably under the instructions of the Political Department of the Government of India. No one imagines that the youthful Maharaja has any important say in vital matters. No one supposes that the English Prime Minister could function as such for a day without the goodwill and support of the Government of India. The slightest disapproval of his policy by the Political Department would result in the immediate change of that policy or in his removal from his office.

In Orissa the regrettable murder of the British Agent, Major Bazalgette, has led—as such acts even when committed in a moment of folly always lead—to unfortunate consequences. The people of the Orissa States<sup>1</sup> are backward and have to suffer for their lack of understanding of our basic principles. This act is a warning to us to conduct our movement in such a manner that the people realize its significance and adhere strictly to its policy of non-violence. For them to forget this is to injure their own cause.

The reaction of the British Power to the tragedy of Ranpur was significant. Armed forces were brought from distant parts of India and a large concentration of troops

<sup>1</sup> There are about 60 territories known as the Orissa States.

in Orissa proclaimed the might of the Paramount Power. What were these troops supposed to do? There was no rebellion, no violent aggression. The starving peasantry fled at their approach and the State of Ranpur became an uninhabited wilderness. It is said that some trouble was feared from the backward jungle tribes, the Gonds. Was the British Army in such numbers required to face the bows and arrows of these poor backward countrymen of ours? But the Gonds have done nothing and will not do anything aggressive unless they are goaded by intolerable misery. They have to be met gently and their grievances removed. But the way of imperialism is different.

It was not the possibility of any action by the Gonds that brought the armed hosts to Orissa. The troops came to overawe the peasantry of the States and to strengthen the Rulers in opposing their demands. They were utilized to suppress the movement of freedom. This was an intervention of the most flagrant kind on behalf of the Paramount Power on the side of tyranny and corrupt administrations. - Everyone knows that some of the States in Orissa are the worst and most degraded of their kind in India.

Quite apart from Ranpur and long before the murder of Major Bazalgette there, the tyrannical administrations of Dhenkanal and Talchar had oppressed their people to such an extent that a great exodus had taken place from these States. From twenty to thirty thousand persons had crossed the boundaries of the States and entered the province of Orissa. A demand came from the Rulers for the extradition from the province to the States of the leaders of this exodus, so that they might be made to suffer for their opposition to the State administration. This demand was supported by the British authority. It was a demand which no Congress ministry could agree to without losing honour and betraying our comrades in the States and being false to our principles.

We do not wish to shield anyone who is guilty. We are perfectly prepared for a full inquiry. But the inquiry that is needed is an inquiry into the offences and mal-

administration and oppression of the Dhenkanal and Talchar State Governments. It is these State authorities that should be tried for the sorrow and misery that they have brought on their people.

The Governments of the major States have been apt pupils in some ways of British Imperialism. Among other things they have learnt the art of utilising communal differences to check popular movements. In Travancore a powerful people's movement is opposed and sought to be discredited on the plea that it is a communal movement, consisting mainly of Christians; in Kashmir the popular movement is called communal because it is largely Muslim in composition; in Hyderabad it is said to be communal because it is predominantly Hindu. The demands put forward on behalf of these several movements might be, as they indeed are, wholly national with no communal tinge or bias in them, but some excuse has to be found to discredit and oppose them and the plea of communalism is a useful one.

Hyderabad and Kashmir are the two premier States in India and we might have hoped that they would set an example to the other States by introducing free institutions and responsible government. Unhappily both are exceedingly backward politically and socially. Hyderabad is a predominantly Hindu State with a Muslim ruling class; Kashmir is predominantly a Muslim State with a Hindu ruling class. Both thus present the same type of problem, and both have the same background of extreme poverty among the masses, illiteracy, industrial backwardness and undeveloped resources. In painful contrast with this general poverty and wretchedness, the Rulers of both are probably the two richest individuals in India. Kashmir is slightly more advanced politically as it has a kind of legislative assembly, but this has little power, and the Ordinances that obtain there are monstrous in their severity. In Hyderabad we have probably the lowest level of civil liberty in India, and latterly attention has been drawn to the prohibition of even certain religious ceremonies. This low level in Hyderabad is not the reaction to any aggressive

movement but has been for long the normal state of affairs.

It is distressing that in these two great States such conditions should prevail. It was natural that in both of them popular movements should grow up and spread to the masses. This took place in Kashmir first and later in Hyderabad. It was inevitable that such movements should affect the great majority of the population—the Muslims in Kashmir and the Hindus in Hyderabad. If, under the circumstances, they showed a certain communal tinge to begin with, it was not surprising. Even so, they did not cease to be popular movements representing the urge of the masses, and their objective was a national one which would bring relief and progress to all. To condemn them as communal movements was to blind oneself deliberately to the facts, and for the minority groups in either State to lend colour to this condemnation was to injure their own cause. For this meant that the minority was opposed to freedom and progress and clung on to some petty special privileges which, it was thought, the present régime gave it.

As a matter of fact the two movements progressively developed on national lines, and in Kashmir, I am glad to say, a number of wise and far-seeing Hindus and Sikhs threw their weight on the side of the popular movement and supported the "National Demand" which asked for responsible government. I am sure that in Hyderabad many far-seeing Muslims will do likewise. The leaders of these movements in both the States realize the extreme importance of steering clear of communalism and have tried to do so. They must not weaken at any moment in this or else they will injure their cause. The minorities must also realize that it is inevitable that responsible government will come to the States, and freedom will bring rich gifts for them as much as for the others. To oppose this struggle of the people or to be passive spectators in it is to prove unworthy of and false to the future that beckons to us all.

Because Hyderabad and Kashmir have essentially the same problem, though it has a different complexion in

-each, it should not be difficult to consider the two together and to offer the same solution, in so far as minority rights are concerned. That solution should be in keeping with the broad principles laid down by the Congress and must fit in with responsible government.

In Hyderabad a peculiar situation arose some time back which resulted in producing a certain confusion in the public mind. The State Congress<sup>1</sup> was declared an illegal organization although its activity was the perfectly peaceful and constitutional one of enrolling members and strengthening its organization. But the State has been nurtured in the traditions of the mediæval age and even this was objected to and stopped. The State Congress thereupon justifiably refused to agree to this ban and attempted to carry on their activities. This involved peaceful satyagraha and hundreds suffered under it. About the same time or a little later, a religious organization and a communal organization also started some kind of satyagraha. In the case of the religious organization the reason was the banning by the State authorities of certain religious ceremonials and forms of worship which are commonly practised all over India. It is astonishing that the authorities should have taken this step which strikes at the root of religious liberty in India and goes counter to the professed principles of everyone. It was natural that this should cause resentment. But it was unfortunate that satyagraha should have been started on this basis at that time. This confused the issue and gave an excuse to the State authorities to put the demand for political freedom in the background.

After careful consideration of all the aspects of the situation the State Congress was advised to suspend its satya-

<sup>1</sup> The Hyderabad situation was "peculiar" in that the agitation of the State Congress for governmental reforms was suppressed at the same time as that of religious organizations for the civil right of free worship. The communal issue was exploited in a State in which the majority of the population are Hindus while the ruling family is Muslim. The State Congress was agitating for constitutional reform, and had no connection with the communal agitation.

graha so that the political issue might not be mixed up with communal and religious ones. The State Congress thereupon suspended their satyagraha. In spite of this the Hyderabad authorities had not the wisdom or the grace to release the satyagrahi prisoners or to remove their extraordinary ban on the organization.

Unfortunately the communal and religious satyagraha was continued by the other organizations and the communal aspect of the question became intensified and conflicts took place in distant parts of India. Those responsible for it paid little heed to the consequences of their action, nor did they realize that a popular movement is an organic growth from below and cannot be artificially imposed from above. As a result of this the political movement for freedom has received a setback and the communal issue dominates the scene.

In Kashmir also, the civil disobedience campaign was suspended last year to give a chance to the State authorities to retrace their steps and remedy some of the evils they had done. But they lack wisdom and grace also, and in spite of this suspension hundreds of civil disobedience prisoners, including the leader of the movement, Shaikh Mohamad Abdulla, continued in prison, and the infamous ordinance known as Notification 19-L as well as the Seditious Meetings Act of 1914<sup>1</sup> still function.

It is obvious that both in Kashmir and Hyderabad existing conditions cannot be put up with, and if the State authorities continue to act in the manner they have so far done, a resumption of civil disobedience will become inevitable.

None of us wants conflict, but in this dissolving age conflict surrounds us at every step and the world rattles back to chaos and the rule of brutal violence. None of us

<sup>1</sup> See note 1, on p. 37, for Notification 19-L. The Act of 1914 laid down that police permission must be obtained for the holding of any "meeting for the furtherance or discussion of any subject likely to cause disturbance or public excitement or for the exhibition or distribution of any written or printed matter relating to any subject. Reports of such meetings may be taken by the police."

wants this chaos in India for that is no prelude to freedom. Yet while we recognize that our strength grows, the forces of disruption and disintegration, of communalism and provincialism, of irresponsibility and narrow-mindedness also grow. We have to remember that British Imperialism, though weakening at its centre, is still a formidable opponent, and freedom will have to be purchased by many a struggle. Neither we nor anyone else in the world can view the future light-heartedly, for the present is full of sorrow and disaster, and the immediate future of the world is wrapped in gloom. Yet in India there are gleams of hope though dark clouds surround us. The brightest of these rays comes from the newly awakened people of the States. We who presume to shoulder the burden of their struggle have a heavy responsibility, and it will require all our courage and our wisdom to discharge that faithfully. Strong language will not help us; it is often a sign of weakness and a substitute for action. It is action that is demanded today, wise and effective action which takes us speedily to our goal, controls the forces of disruption, and builds up the united India of our dreams.

Petty gains and advantages may lure us from time to time, but if they come in the way of the larger objective they must be rejected and swept away. In the excitement of the moment we may feel inclined to forget our principles; if we surrender to this inclination, we do so at our peril. Our cause is a great one, so must our means be above reproach. We play for high stakes, let us be worthy of them. Great causes and little men go ill together.

The freedom of the people of the States is a big enough thing, yet it is part of the larger freedom of India, and till we gain that larger freedom, it is struggle for us. If the federation is imposed upon us, we shall fight it and sweep it away. Wherever the British Power intervenes against the people in the States, we shall have to face it. The time approaches when the final solution has to come—the Constituent Assembly of all the Indian people framing the Constitution of a free and democratic India.

The States' Peoples' Conference has done good work in



the past, but this has been only a fraction of the work it might have done. It must now turn to the efficient organization of all its activities, so that it might become a clearing house for all that pertains to the States, and a source of help and inspiration to all our comrades in the struggle. It must help in building up Praja Mandals or people's organizations in the States. It must take care to steer clear of all communalism, and it must, above all, remember, and make others remember, that non-violence is the basis of this struggle.

It is our great good fortune that in this struggle we have the backing of the National Congress and the support of its leaders. Most cheering of all is the thought that we have Gandhiji to guide and inspire us.

*February, 1939.*

### 3

## *The Indian States and the Crisis*

WHAT of the Indian States in this crisis? What are the people there to do now, or later, if satyagraha envelops the land? These questions are repeatedly put to me, and I confess that I find it difficult to answer them. The difficulty arises from a variety of factors. The States are so numerous and so various, their political and economic development varies so enormously, that a uniform policy for all is hardly possible. It is true that fundamentally the problem is the same in all the States, and that problem is a part of the all-India problem. It is obvious that the policy that the States' Governments are pursuing is inspired and controlled by the Political Department of the Government of India. There is a patent uniformity in that policy, as there must be when the source is one and the same. The reaction of the States' people should also, therefore, be uniform, in so far as this can be brought about.

Let us look at the problem of the States in its larger context. The States were partly the creation of the British Raj; all of them have subsisted for these long years because of the protection of British Imperialism. There can be little doubt that but for this shelter and protection they would have changed enormously during the last hundred years. They look still, as of old, to this imperialism for protection, and British Imperialism looks to them for support against the powerful nationalism of the Indian people. It is a combination for the mutual benefit of each other, and aimed at the Indian people, whether they live in the Provinces or the States. The whole scheme of Federation contained in the 1935 Act was aimed to give strength and stability to this combination and to disable the Indian people from challenging it effectively.

In recent years there has been much talk about the so-

called independence of the States. And yet the fact is that they are far more under the thumb of the Political Department of the Government of India now than they have ever been before. Apart from privately exercised control, we see vast numbers of British officers, previously connected with the Political Department or with the Imperial Services, in high offices in the States, completely controlling the administration there. It will be found that wherever this is so there is usually greater repression of the people of the State. The Rulers are hardly in the picture at all.

In the crisis that is upon us it is clear that the Indian States Governments stand fully ranged with British Imperialism. Not only that, they have flirted and come to private arrangements with all reactionaries. It is well known that communal organizations are in high favour with the authorities in the States. There is nothing communal about this marriage of convenience. It is a political coming together—reaction clinging to reaction. And so Hindu Rulers come to terms with and encourage Muslim communal organizations, and Muslim Rulers are friendly to Hindu communal organizations. The opposition of both is to progress and freedom and the growth of national unity and strength.

The old intrigue has borne fruit, and the British Government relies upon communalism and the feudalism of the States to meet the tide of advancing nationalism. Let us realize fully who our opponents are. Recent developments are to be welcomed for this reason at least, for they separate the wheat from the chaff, and all of us can see the picture of present-day India in all its brutal nakedness.

What are the States people to do? In this hour of crisis discipline is needed and no two voices should command. It is for our leader in the struggle, Mahatma Gandhi, to issue directions, and we should adhere to them. As I understand him, he does not want the States people to launch satyagraha the moment Congress starts it in the rest of India. Obviously widespread satyagraha in India

will have a powerful effect on the States and their people. The whole of India will be shaken up and no one knows what the consequences will be, except that they will be far-reaching. The States people cannot be mere lookers-on, and they will have to bear many trials and tribulations. They must prepare themselves for them and be ready for all eventualities. What they ultimately do will depend on the course of events and their own strength. The ultimate decision will rest with them.

While, therefore, the States people should not automatically join a Congress satyagraha movement, some of them may have to start their own satyagraha for reasons which apply to them. Even today a satyagraha movement would be justified in many States where the cup of humiliation and repression is overfull. But let them not act hastily or precipitately, but with deliberation, which is the sign of strength. Haste at the wrong moment leads to adventurism and demoralization. The time of trial and testing will come soon enough; let them work hard and get ready for it. The Indian Princes have hitched their wagon to the chariot of imperialism. They have both had their day and will go together.

ANDHERI,

*April 23, 1940.*

## *Christian Missionaries in India*

For some months past a controversy has been carried on among Christian circles in India in regard to the "Missionary Pledge." Two American missionaries who sympathized with India's demand for freedom and wished to give public expression to that sympathy, have had to sever their connection with the missions, and one of them has returned to the United States. Some Indian Christians connected with missionary establishments in India have also been affected. A "Krishtagraha Manifesto" on behalf of these foreign missionaries who wished to align themselves with Indian nationalism and freedom was published in the Press and attracted attention. Mr. Cyril Modak has further discussed this question in a series of interesting articles in the *National Herald*.

I am glad that this question has been raised and public attention has been drawn to it. For my part, I did not even know, till recently, that there was such a thing as a "Missionary Pledge." This knowledge throws a great deal of light on the background of mission work in India.

Many of us are apt to forget that Christianity is one of the oldest of religions in India. It came to our country more than eighteen hundred years ago, long before it spread in Europe. Not being associated with political domination in any way, it found a welcome, as India has always welcomed religions and ideas from abroad, and it spread in South India. There is a large population of Syrian Christians (that is, Indians belonging to the Syrian type of Christianity) in South India, notably in Cochin and Travancore. During the Mughal period Catholic missionaries and Jesuits came, and their work also bore substantial results in the south.

With the coming of the British power, a new type of missionary came to India. He was attached to British officials and the British army of occupation, and repre-

sented British Imperialism far more than the spirit of Christ. An Ecclesiastical Department grew up, as a part of the Government machinery, and the burden of this, in the shape of taxes, fell on the non-Christian population. Even now this department is a reserved subject under the Government of India Act and no Provincial Government may touch it.

Even the private missions that were established here were affected by this Government patronage and connection. In the average Indian mind, the Christian missionary was almost indistinguishable from the alien official. The Indian Christians, in the north especially, reacted to all this by tending to become a sect apart, not only in matters of religion but in other matters also, and in clinging helplessly to Government patronage. The national renaissance which swept the country and brought new life to millions, passed them by, leaving them unaffected and uninspired. They drew no strength from it, as others did. Many individuals among them, of course, took part in the National movement.

Christian missions in India have undoubtedly done good work in many fields, notably in education, and we must be grateful to them. But they have always worked with a political background that was unfavourable and, in the public eye, they have been allies of imperialism. This has somewhat lessened their capacity for good work even in the constructive field, and the barriers that separated them from the mass of Indian humanity have remained. To some extent I understand this better now that I know about the "Missionary Pledge." Inevitably, even if as individuals they do not wish it, they have to line up with imperialism in India. That may have certain advantages for them under the existing order, but it is clear that they purchase these advantages at a cost to their cause which is bound to grow as the months and years go by. Even from the point of view of expediency the ship of imperialism is a sinking one. India must and will be independent and the future of India will be decided by the Indian people alone.

But there is a more vital aspect and more dangerous consequence. Is it good for Christianity anywhere, more especially in India, to be associated with foreign domination and imperialism? Can what we consider the truth spread if it is tied to untruth and violent rule? Can a man of truth submit to, or even be a passive agent of, the processes of untruth and injustice? It makes all the difference in the world, as a famous Bishop once said, whether we give Truth the first place or the second. The "Missionary Pledge" seeks to prevent the full expression of the truth and suppresses the conscience of the individual. It lines up Christianity in India, to some extent at least, with the forces of reaction. It is strange that the gospel of Jesus, the gentle but unrelenting rebel against untruth and injustice in all forms, should be made a tool of imperialism and capitalism and political domination and social injustice.

Christianity went to China much later than it came to India. Some famous and very learned Jesuit Fathers became mandarins and even governors of provinces. Later, with the coming of Western imperialism, Christian missionaries became the forerunners of foreign trade and intervention and became very unpopular. But during the last generation or more Christian missionaries and mission colleges, on the whole, have sided with the national movement, and as a result of this Christianity holds a high place in China today.

Whether there should be a Missionary Pledge or not in India is a matter directly concerning the missionaries themselves or Christians in India. But indirectly it concerns others also, and therefore it is right that others should consider it. If Christianity is to be a popular religion in India it must dissociate itself from such pledges and from official patronage and ecclesiastical departments. It must rest on the strength of its message and on the goodwill of the people.

*February 27, 1940.*

PART TWO

*CONGRESS POLITICS*

- A. PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY
- B. FROM LUCKNOW TO TRIPURI
- C. AFTER TRIPURI





## A. PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

### I

#### *Congress Accepts Office<sup>1</sup>*

ON April 1, 1937, Part III of the Act of 1935 was put into operation, and Provincial Autonomy as envisaged in the new Constitution was inaugurated. The parties or groups controlling a majority in the Provincial Assemblies were then entitled to shoulder the responsibilities of government, in terms of the Act, in all the provinces. In six provinces the Congress Assembly Parties were in a clear majority over all other parties; in some provinces they were the largest single party. The six provinces where they were in a clear majority (Madras, U. P., Behar, Bombay, C. P. and Orissa) comprised two-thirds of British India's population. The Congress was thus in a position to undertake, if it so chose, the formation of Ministries in these six provinces. In most of the remaining provinces it could have done so by forming an alliance or coalition with another group.

The question of office acceptance and formation of Ministries had agitated the Congress for the past two years and a final decision had been repeatedly postponed. After the General Elections had brought striking success to the Congress and the inauguration of the new Constitution was imminent, the decision could no longer be delayed. The All-India Congress Committee therefore met for this purpose in Delhi in the third week of March, 1937, and finally decided to permit acceptance of office in the provinces where the Congress commanded a majority in the Legislature, but they made this subject to a condition.

<sup>1</sup> This is a joint note of Narendra Dev, K. T. Shah, and Jawaharlal Nehru for the series issued by the National Publications Society.

Ministries were only to be formed by Congressmen if the leader of the Congress Party in the provincial Legislature was satisfied, and was in a position to declare publicly, that the Governor would not use his special powers of interference, or set aside the advice of Ministers in regard to their constitutional activities. The All-India Convention, consisting of Congress members of the various Provincial Assemblies and members of the All-India Congress Committee, accepted this decision of the All-India Congress Committee.

In accordance with this direction the leaders of Congress Parties who were invited by Governors to form Ministries asked for the necessary assurances, and these not having been given, the leaders expressed their inability to undertake the formation of Ministries.

The majority party having refused office, a deadlock ensued in these six provinces, and the Governors appointed *ad interim* Ministers who had no backing in the Legislatures. The Legislatures themselves were not summoned, as this would have inevitably led to the defeat of the *ad interim* ministries and a sharpening of the conflict.

During the three months that followed many statements were issued on behalf of the Congress as well as of the British Government, defending and justifying the position taken up by each. The controversy was often carried on in legal and constitutional terms, but, in essence, the conflict went deeper and represented the antagonism between British Imperialism and the desire of the Indian people to be free. By asking for assurances from Governors not to use their special powers of interference, the Congress wanted to develop a convention that the Ministers' advice would prevail even as regards these special powers. It wanted a free hand in the provincial Government within the limits of the Act.

The Governors' executive powers and functions, according to the Act, are of three kinds:

- (i) Those to be exercised in the Governor's sole discretion;

- (ii) those in which he is to exercise his individual judgment; and
- (iii) those in which he must act upon the advice of his Ministers.

The assurances demanded by the Congress referred to the first two classes. In the first of these the Governor need not even refer to his Ministers, if he so chooses, and can take decisions entirely on his own responsibility. In the second class fall certain obligations imposed upon the Governor in which he must exercise his individual judgment, but, before he does so, he is to consult his Ministers. Should the advice of the Ministers not be acceptable to him, he can disregard it. The list of matters in which the Governor is entitled to exercise his own judgment is formidable and imposing, and it was an appreciation of this fact that led the Congress to ask for assurances to avoid obstruction and continual deadlocks in the government of the province.

It was stated on behalf of the British Government that such assurances could not be given without doing violence to the Act. The Congress leaders stated that, while they were entirely opposed to the Act as a whole, they did not contemplate amendments to the Act by demanding assurances. Such assurances could be given even within the terms of the Act. Where discretion was given to the Governor he could certainly exercise it in favour of the advice of the Ministers, and he could give an assurance to this effect. The Governor was nowhere prohibited by the Act from exercising his discretion in accordance with his Ministers' advice.

As the controversy took a legal turn, as to whether the assurances demanded could or could not be given under the Act, Mahatma Gandhi, on behalf of the Congress, proposed that the matter be referred to an impartial tribunal for decision. This offer was not accepted by the British Government. Nor was recourse had to Section 310 of the Act, which was framed especially to meet possible difficulties during the transitional period.

As the controversy proceeded there was a slight toning down by interpretations of the original demand for assurances on behalf of the Congress. The British Government also changed their ground by slow degrees and finally took up the position that, though a definite assurance in terms of the Congress resolution could not be given, the essence of Provincial Autonomy, as envisaged in the new Constitution, was the co-operation of the Governor with his Ministers.

The position of the *ad interim* Ministries was becoming more and more difficult. They were highly unpopular and they had no sanction behind them except the will of the Governor. As they could not face the Legislature, the Legislature was not summoned in spite of repeated demands from the elected members. Provincial Autonomy seemed to be reduced to a farce. It was obvious that these conditions could not last much longer, as the Legislatures had to be summoned within six months and the Budget had to be passed. It was this deepening crisis which led to the largest advance on the part of the British Government, but this advance was accompanied by a broad hint from the Viceroy that if the Congress majorities persisted in their refusal to accept office, the Constitution would have to be suspended under Section 93 of the Act in those provinces where the Congress commanded a majority.

It was to consider this situation that the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress met, and on July 7, 1937, it decided to permit acceptance of Cabinet responsibilities. It declared that while the declarations on behalf of the British Government exhibit a desire to make an approach to the Congress demand, they fall short of the assurances asked for in terms of the A.I.C.C. resolution. It stated further that it was unable to subscribe to the doctrine of partnership propounded in the aforesaid declarations, and that the proper description of the existing relationship between the British Government and the people of India is that of exploiter and exploited, and hence they have a different outlook upon almost everything of vital importance. Nevertheless the Committee

felt that the situation created as a result of the circumstances and events that had occurred since the Congress demand was put forward, warranted the belief that it will not be easy for the Governors to use their special powers. The Committee therefore resolved that Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto. But it added that it wished to make it clear that office was to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto and to further in every way the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand, and of prosecuting the constructive programme of the Congress on the other.

Within a few days of this resolution of the Working Committee, the leaders of Congress Parties in the six provinces were invited to form Cabinets, and they accepted the invitation. The constitutional deadlock thus ended. Congress Cabinets have now been formed in Madras, United Provinces, Bombay, Behar, Central Provinces, and Orissa.

*July, 1937.*

*The Decision to accept Office*

## I

Soon after the conclusion of the Working Committee meeting, I was asked by over-eager pressmen for my opinion on the Working Committee resolution on office acceptance. I told them that I could not say anything about it as members of the Working Committee do not discuss its resolutions. And then I added lightly that for a member of the Working Committee a resolution of the Committee must be right. For him, so long as he continued to be such a member, the Working Committee, like the king, could do no wrong.

I feel, however, that I cannot dispose of this question in this light vein and that I should try to explain the significance of the resolution to my comrades of the Congress. For two or three years now, the subject of office acceptance has roused fierce controversy in the country, and individuals and groups have debated it and clung stoutly to their respective views. Those views remain much the same, but what lay behind those views? Few, I suppose, objected to office acceptance on principle, and even those who thought in terms of revolutionary changes did not consider that acceptance of office was inevitably and invariably a wrong step. They, and many with them, feared that acceptance involved a grave risk of our getting involved in petty reformist activities and forgetting for a while the main issue. They feared that the initiative would pass from the masses and our activities would be largely confined to the stuffy and limited sphere of the council chamber. It was this risk that induced the Congress, the A.I.C.C. and the Working Committee to emphasize repeatedly that more important work lay outside the Legislatures, in contact with the masses. If we remember that and our objective of independence always and

work to that end, the risk lessens and we may even utilize the council chamber to this very end.

I have no doubt that the Working Committee resolution passed at Wardha reflects the opinion of the majority of the Congress today. This opinion is in favour of acceptance of office, but it is even more strongly and unanimously in favour of the basic Congress policy of fighting the new Constitution and ending it. Acceptance of office may be a phase in our freedom struggle, but to end the Constitution and have a Constituent Assembly is our main objective today as it was yesterday. Acceptance of office does not mean by an iota acceptance of the slave Constitution. It means a fight against the coming of the Federation by all means in our power, inside and outside the Legislatures.

All this the Working Committee resolution has emphasized, and it has made clear again that we are not going to be partners and co-operators in the imperialist firm. The gulf between the British Empire and us cannot be bridged, our viewpoints and objectives are utterly different. Thus it is not to work the Constitution in the normal way that we go to the Assemblies or accept office. It is to try to prevent the Federation from materializing, and thereby to stultify the Constitution and prepare the ground for the Constituent Assembly and independence. It is further to strengthen the masses and wherever possible, in the narrow sphere of the Constitution, to give some relief to them. Let this be borne in mind by every Congressman.

The last three months and more have shown that the Congress was not eager for office and the spoils thereof. Office was ours even without our asking for it, if only we could reconcile ourselves to the prospect. We looked upon this question always from the point of view of strengthening the people for the struggle for independence. We hesitated and tried to clear the way for our work and weighed the advantages and disadvantages. There can be no doubt that these three months have made the Congress position clearer and stronger, and if we accept office we do so for the longer purpose in view and we leave it when that purpose can be better served otherwise.



The Working Committee resolution was inevitable under the circumstances, and I trust that it will be loyally followed by all Congressmen. But to be loyal to the spirit underlying it we must carry on our work outside the Legislatures with even greater energy. We must not lose our sense of perspective. Real strength even for our work in the Legislatures, and much more so for the struggles ahead, comes from outside. This is the significance of this resolution as of previous ones.

We have taken a new step involving new responsibilities and some risks. But if we are true to our objectives and are ever vigilant, we shall overcome those risks and gain strength and power from this step also. (Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.)

July 10, 1937.

## II.

The resolution of the Working Committee giving permission to accept office and the consequent formation of Congress Ministries in six provinces has created a new situation. Many Congressmen view this with a measure of apprehension, many others expect great things out of this change. Both these reactions are natural. We have swerved off to some extent from the path we have followed for so long, and a feeling of hesitation in treading over strange ground is inevitable. Some fear unknown pitfalls, others look forward to an easy march. But all of us, who have deemed it a privilege to serve our country and our people through the Congress, have loyally accepted the Working Committee decision, and in accordance with the traditions of our great organization kept faith with each other.

If tried Congressmen feel hesitant on new ground, what of the masses? What do they think of this new orientation of our policy? What do they expect from the Congress now? Do any of them imagine that our struggle for freedom has ended because Congressmen occupy high offices? Do they think foolishly that Swaraj is at hand?

They must be puzzled to see some of their old comrades who were in prison with them but yesterday, sitting in the seats of the mighty in those imposing structures which have been the citadels of British Imperialism. (Red-liveried chaprasis hover about them and the enervating perfume of power surrounds them) What has happened to these comrades of ours? they must wonder. What strange sea-change has transformed the convict of yesterday into the Minister of today? Is it that they have forgotten and deserted us poor starving folk, we who looked to them so hopefully for relief from misery? Or are they going to lead us to a land overflowing with milk and honey, the happy land of our dreams, so different from our present lot?

Both these pictures would be wrong. We have not left them and we are their comrades as of old. Though some of us may sit on chairs of state, the same khadi covers our bodies, the same thoughts fill our minds, the same goal calls to us insistently and drives us to action. But we are yet far from that goal and the power to mould our country's destiny is not ours yet. There is no Swaraj or Congress raj, though Congressmen may be ministers. And yet we have a new opportunity for serving and strengthening the masses and perhaps easing their many burdens a little. But even that service will depend on the attitude of the masses, on their organized strength and on their intelligent appreciation of what is happening.

It is incumbent on us, therefore, to go to the masses and explain to them what has happened. The Working Committee resolution must be read out to them and all its implications fully explained. They must understand that while there is this great apparent change on the surface, the old conflict between imperialism and nationalism continues, and in this conflict strength comes to us from them and not from high office. And those of our comrades who are in office today, and who deserve every help and sympathy from us in the arduous and responsible work they have undertaken, will only work effectively if the masses are vigilant and press forward the Congress demands.

I suggest, therefore, that meetings for this purpose be held all over India, in town and village, on a particular day, Sunday, August 1, when the Working Committee resolution should be read out and explained and, while offering comradely greeting to the Congress Ministers, we should pledge ourselves anew to independence and the removal of the poverty of our people. On that day also the Flag salutation ceremony should be solemnly performed everywhere. August 1 is a special and significant day for us, a day long dedicated to India's freedom. On that day seventeen years ago the great Lokamanya passed away, and on that very day India launched the non-co-operation movement and began wielding that weapon which has strengthened and vitalized our people so greatly. It is fitting, therefore, that this day be suitably celebrated, and we should remember the past and we should look to the future with the same determination which has held us for so long.

A change has come over our provincial governments, and though this change does not vitally affect the relation of Britain to India, it is right that it should affect all our own countrymen whether they are in Government service or not. It is time that every Indian came out on India's side and co-operated with the Congress in the high tasks that it has undertaken. I trust that as an earnest of this sympathy and goodwill every Indian, who stands for India's freedom, will wear khadi, the emblem of our freedom, and will display and honour the National Flag. I trust also that the police force, which has so long been hostile to our people, will think in terms of India now and not of alien masters, and will seek the co-operation and goodwill of the masses. The Congress ministers, if they mean anything at all, mean that the interests of these masses will be dominant.

August 1 should be observed not only in the provinces where there are Congress Ministries but in other provinces also. In these other provinces the resolutions to be passed will be suitably altered.

July 20, 1937.

# 3

## *The First Objectives*

### 1

THE formation of Congress Ministries in six provinces has brought a breath of fresh air in the turgid and authoritarian atmosphere of India. New hopes have arisen, new visions full of promise float before the eyes of the masses. We breathe more freely for the moment at least. And yet our task is infinitely harder, more complex, and dangers and difficulties beset us at every step. We are apt to be misled by the illusion that we possess power, when the reality of power is not within our grasp. But the responsibility is ours in the eyes of the people, and if we cannot discharge this to their satisfaction, if hopes are unfulfilled and visions unrealized, the burden of disillusionment will also be ours. The difficulty lies in the inherent contradictions of the situation, in the vastness of India's problems demanding a far-reaching and radical remedy, which it is not in our power to give under present conditions. We have to keep the right perspective always before us, the objectives for which the Congress stands, the independence of India and the ending of the poverty of the people. We have at the same time to labour for lesser ends which bring some immediate relief to the masses. We have to act simultaneously on this double front.

If we are to achieve any success in this great enterprise, we must keep faith with our people, be frank with them, take them into our confidence, and tell them our difficulties and what we can hope to achieve and what we cannot, till greater power comes to us. We must examine the principles on which we stand, the anchor which holds us, for to forget them is to cast ourselves adrift on a sea of pettiness and trivial detail, with no lighthouse to guide us on our path. We dare not grow complacent.

## II

All our activities must therefore be guided by the objective of Indian independence. No Congressman, whether he is a Minister or a village worker, can afford to forget this, for then he will lose the right perspective which is essential for all of us. To achieve this independence we have to get rid of the new Constitution, and so the Minister, who functions under this very Constitution, will always think in terms of replacing this by another, framed by the Indian people, through a Constituent Assembly. That thought, though it might not materialize in action for some time, should govern his outlook. The next major step in that direction will come when the attempt is made to thrust Federation on us against our declared will. That attempt has to be combated, in the Assemblies as well as outside, and we shall use all our strength to prevent this Federation from functioning.

Those of us who have to shoulder the burden of directing national policy and giving a lead to our people, have to think in even wider terms and to look often beyond the frontiers of India. Our own problems have to be seen in relation to international problems; the possibilities of great crises or wars. The Congress has laid down our policy in the event of such crises developing, and if we are to abide by that policy, as we must, we must ever keep it in mind. The recent despatch of Indian troops to Shanghai is a reminder of how our resources are utilized for protecting imperialist interests. This exploitation of India will continue and grow unless we are vigilant. It might land us, almost unawares, in a war, not of our seeking, but in the interests of the very imperialism which we seek to remove from India. Congressmen must, therefore, not allow themselves to forget the international implications of what happens in India. Our Ministries are not directly concerned with these larger events, but indirectly they may also come in contact with them and might be able to influence them.

## III

The Congress has laid repeated stress on Civil Liberty and on the right of free expression of opinion, free association and combination, a free Press, and freedom of conscience and religion. We have condemned the use of emergency powers and ordinances and special legislation to oppress the Indian people, and have declared in our programme that we shall take all possible steps to end these powers and legislation. The acceptance of office in the Provinces does not vary this policy, and indeed much has already been done to give effect to it. Political prisoners have been released, the ban on numerous organizations removed, and press securities have been returned. It is true that something still remains to be done in this respect, but this is not because of any lack of desire to take further steps on the part of Congress Ministries, but because of extraneous difficulties. I trust that it will soon be possible to complete this task and to redeem our pledge in full by the repeal of all repressive and abnormal provincial legislation. Meanwhile the public should remember the peculiar difficulties under which the Congress Ministers have to function, and not be over-eager to cast the blame on them for something for which they are not responsible.

Civil Liberty is not merely for us an airy doctrine or a pious wish, but something which we consider essential for the orderly development and progress of a nation. It is the civilized approach to a problem about which people differ, the non-violent way of dealing with it. To crush a contrary opinion forcibly and allow it no expression, because we dislike it, is essentially of the same genus as cracking the skull of an opponent because we disapprove of him. It does not even possess the virtue of success. The man with the cracked skull might collapse and die, but the suppressed opinion or idea has no such sudden end and it survives and prospers the more it is sought to be crushed with force. History is full of such examples. Long ex-

perience has taught us that it is dangerous in the interest of truth to suppress opinions and ideas; it has further taught us that it is foolish to imagine that we can do so. It is far easier to meet an evil in the open and to defeat it in fair combat in people's minds, than to drive it underground and have no hold on it or proper approach to it. Evil flourishes far more in the shadows than in the light of day.

But what is good and what is evil may itself be a doubtful matter, and who is then to decide? Governments all over the world are not known to be particularly competent in giving such decisions, and official censors are not an attractive crowd. Yet governments have to shoulder a heavy responsibility and they cannot discuss the philosophy of a question when action is demanded. In our imperfect world we have often to prefer a lesser evil to a greater one.

For us it is not merely a matter of giving effect to a programme to which we have given adherence. Our entire approach to the question must be psychologically different. It cannot be the policeman's approach which has been so characteristic of the British Government in India, the method of force and violence and coercion. Congress Ministries should avoid, as far as possible, all coercive processes and should try to win over their critics by their actions and, where possible, by personal contacts. Even if they fail in converting the critic or the opponent, they will make him innocuous, and the public sympathy, which almost invariably goes to a victim of official action, will no longer be his. They will win the public to their side and thus create an atmosphere which is not favourable to wrong action.

But in spite of this approach and this desire to avoid coercive action, occasions may arise when Congress Ministries cannot avoid taking some such action. No Government can tolerate the preaching of violence and communal strife, and if this unfortunately takes place, it has to be curbed by having recourse to the coercive processes of the ordinary law. We believe that there should be no police censorship or banning of books and newspapers, and the

largest freedom should be given to the expression of opinions and ideas. The way we have been cut off from progressive literature from abroad by the policy of the British Government is a public scandal. We must get rid of these bans and censorships and nurture the free soil from which the life of the intellect can grow and the creative faculties can take shape. But still, it must be remembered that there may be exceptional cases of books and newspapers which are so manifestly of an obscene character or promote violence or communal hatred and conflict that some action to check them has to be taken.

#### IV

A number of political prisoners, convicted for violent activities, have recently been released by the Congress Ministries after long terms in prison. They have been welcomed by the public and by Congressmen; and we have been asked if this welcome did not signify an approval of violence. That question reveals an ignorance of public psychology and of the minds of Congressmen. The public and Congressmen alike welcomed them because of the mantle of long suffering that they bore. How many of them had spent their entire youth in prison? how many had faced death without flinching? They had erred and pursued a wrong path, they had followed a policy injurious to the very cause they sought to serve, but they had paid for it in pain and torment and by long years in solitary cells. They had come to realize that the old policy of theirs was utterly wrong. And so the public welcomed them and friendly faces greeted them wherever they went. Has this not got a lesson for governments who imagine that by suppressing a number of individuals they solve a problem? They succeed thereby in intensifying that very problem, and public sympathy, which might well have been against the individual's deeds, turns to him because of his suffering.

The problem of the political prisoners in the Andamans



is with us today, and we see the amazing folly of Government in pursuing a policy which is creating a frenzy of excitement among the public. Thus they intensify the very atmosphere which they seek to remove.

The Congress Ministries have rightly followed a contrary policy because they try to move with public approval, and seek to win over these brave young men, and create an atmosphere favourable to the working of the Congress programme. In that favourable atmosphere even wrong tendencies will wilt and wither away. Everybody of any consequence in Indian politics knows that terrorism is a thing of the past in India. It would have vanished even earlier but for the policy of the British Government in Bengal. Violence is not killed by violence, but by a different approach and removing the causes which lead to it.

On those comrades of ours, who have been released after one or two decades of prison life, rests a special responsibility to be loyal to Congress policy and to work for the fulfilment of the Congress programme. The foundation of that policy is non-violence, and the noble structure of the Congress has been built on that firm foundation. It is necessary that this should be remembered by all Congressmen, for it is even more important today than it has so far been. Loose talk encouraging violence and communal conflict is especially harmful at the present juncture, and it might do grave injury to the Congress cause as well as embarrass the Congress Ministries. We are no longer children in politics; we have grown to man's estate and we have big work ahead, big conflicts to face, difficulties to overcome. Let us face them like men with courage and dignity and discipline. Only through a great organization, deriving its sanctions from the masses, can we face our problems, and great mass organizations are built up through peaceful methods.

## V

The basic problems of India relate to the peasantry and the industrial workers, and of the two the agrarian problem

is far the most important. The Congress Ministries have already begun to tackle this, and executive orders have been passed to bring some temporary relief to the masses. Even this little thing has brought joy and hope to our peasants, and they are looking forward eagerly to the greater changes to come. There is some danger in this eager expectation of the paradise to come, for there is no immediate paradise in prospect. The Congress Ministries, with the best will in the world, are incapable of changing the social order and the present economic system. They are bound down and restricted in a hundred ways and have to move in a narrow orbit. That indeed was, and is, a principal reason for our opposition to the new Constitution. We must, therefore, be perfectly frank with our people and tell them what we can do and what we cannot do under present conditions. That very inability of ours becomes a powerful argument in favour of the vital change which will give us real power.

But meanwhile we have to go as far as we possibly can to give relief to them. We must face this task courageously and not be afraid of vested interests and those who would obstruct us. The real measure of the success of Congress Ministries will be the change in the agrarian laws that they bring about and the relief they give to the peasantry. This change in the laws will come from the Legislature, but the value of that change will be enhanced if the Congress members of the Legislatures keep in close touch with their constituencies and inform the peasantry of their policies. Congress parties in the Legislatures should also keep in touch with Congress Committees and with public opinion generally. By this frank approach they will get the friendly co-operation of the public and will be in touch with the realities of the situation. The masses will thus also be trained and disciplined in the democratic method.

A change in the land laws will bring some relief to our peasantry, but our objective is a much bigger one, and for that the pre-requisite is the development of the organized strength of the peasantry. Only by their own strength can they ultimately progress or resist the inroads that

vested interests might make on them. A boon given from above to a weak peasantry may be taken away later, and even a good law may have little value because it cannot be enforced. The proper organization of the peasants in Congress Committees in villages thus becomes essential.

## VI

In regard to the industrial workers, the Congress has not so far developed a detailed programme because the agrarian situation dominates the Indian scene. Some important principles have, however, been laid down in the Karachi resolution<sup>1</sup> and in the Election Manifesto.<sup>2</sup> Labour's right to form unions and to strike has been recognized and the principle of the living wage approved of. The policy recently outlined by the Bombay Government in respect of industrial workers has the general approval of the Working Committee. This policy is by no means a final policy or an ideal one. But it represents what can be attempted and done under present conditions and within a relatively short period of time. I have no doubt that if this programme is given effect to it will bring relief to labour and, what is even more important, give it organizational strength. The very basis of this programme and policy is the strengthening of workers' organizations. The Bombay Government declare, in their statement on Labour Policy, that "they are convinced that no legislative programme can be a substitute for the organized strength of the working class, and till organizations of workers, run on genuine trade union lines, grow up, in the various fields of employment, no lasting good can accrue. Government are therefore anxious to assist in removing real hindrances in the way of the growth of the organization and to promote collective bargaining between the employers and the employees. Means will be devised to discourage victimization of workers for connection with a labour organization and participation in legitimate trade union activity."

<sup>1</sup> August, 1931. } The texts of these appears in Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> August, 1936. }

With regard to trade disputes, the Bombay Government propose legislation to ensure that "no reduction in wages or other change in the conditions of employment to the disadvantage of the workers should take place till they have had sufficient time and opportunity for having the facts and merits of the proposed change examined and all avenues of peaceful settlement of the dispute explored, either through the channel of voluntary negotiation, conciliation, or arbitration, or by the machinery of the law. A corresponding obligation would rest on the workers in respect of demands on their behalf." This means that before a trade dispute develops into open conflict there must be an intermediate stage of negotiation or arbitration. It does not mean that there is compulsory arbitration ending in an award which is finally binding on all parties whether they accept it or not.

Compulsory arbitration of this latter kind has always been opposed by labour, for it strikes at the root of one of their most cherished rights—the right to strike. They also fear, with considerable justification, that in such a compulsory proceeding in a capitalist country, the weight of the State is likely to be cast on the side of the employers. And so they would be tied hand and foot, unable to use the only weapon which they possess and which a century of hard struggle has given them. That is not the present proposal, for that would be contrary to the Congress policy of recognizing the workers' right to strike. That right to strike is fully maintained, but an intermediate stage is provided for to explore avenues of settlement of the dispute. This policy, I am convinced, will be highly to the advantage of all concerned, and especially of labour. Our labour is weak and disorganized and unable to stand up for its rights. The long record of sporadic strikes is a record of almost continuous failure. It is true that even unsuccessful strikes sometimes strengthen the labour movement, but the reverse is still more true, and the present feeble state of our labour movement bears witness to this. For years past labour has been fighting a constant rear-guard action against wage-cuts, almost helpless to prevent

them. If some such legislation as is proposed in Bombay had been in existence, it would have been far more difficult to reduce wages and labour would have been in a much better position to bargain on equal terms with the employers, with probably a friendly public opinion to back it.

The strike is a powerful weapon, the only real weapon of labour. It has to be cherished and preserved and used in an organized and disciplined way with effect when necessity arises. To use it casually and sporadically is to blunt it and thus weaken labour itself. Behind the strike there must be a strong organization and public opinion. This organization seldom develops if there are frequent partial and sporadic strikes which fail.

Organization, therefore, is the primary need of labour, and all who wish well for labour must help in the building up of strong trade unions. They must remember that any form of violence, whether during a strike or at other times, is injurious to labour's interests. It drives the State into the opposing ranks and provokes far greater violence on the part of the State. It disorganizes labour and irritates public opinion. In India it sometimes leads to communal violence which diverts attention immediately from labour's demands. Labour, above everything, cannot afford to be communal or to encourage communalism.

The recent strike in Cawnpore had many lessons to teach us. Much was made in the newspapers of the firing that took place there, and I was even misreported as having said that I approved of this firing. As a matter of fact, I had no knowledge of the facts at the time, and I said so. Subsequently I found that this firing was a trivial and individual affair of little significance. An individual had fired in a moment of excitement, but had fortunately caused no great injury to anyone. But what is worth noting is that the occasional stone throwing from the crowd was indulged in largely by communal elements who were out for trouble. They did not want a settlement. Even when a settlement was arrived at, these communal elements tried their utmost to upset it and prevent the workers

from returning to the mills. Fortunately their influence was not great and the workers' leaders succeeded, after a hard night's work, in explaining the situation to the workers and getting them to resume work. This difficulty would not have arisen if the workers had been properly organized in a trade union.

The lesson is therefore: strengthen the organization and beware of communalism and violence.

The workers and their leaders know well that the Congress Ministries are friendly to them and wish to help them in every possible way. Circumstances beyond their control may prevent them today from going as far as they would like to. But, for the first time in its history, the workers' movement has friendly Provincial Governments in six provinces, and the chance of remedying some of its ills and developing its strength and organization. They will injure their own cause by embarrassing these Governments and withholding their co-operation from them.

## VII

Questions have arisen as to the attitude of Congress Committees and Congressmen generally towards Congress Ministries and the Provincial Governments where they function. Are they to criticize publicly or only privately or say nothing at all? What should our public activities be now in these six provinces?

It is manifest that the Congress is more important than any Ministry. Ministries may come or go, but the Congress goes on till it fulfils its historic mission of achieving national independence for India. That achievement will come, not through Ministries, but through the organized strength of the Indian people acting through the Congress. When that achievement comes in full measure the Congress might well cease to exist. Its task will be done. But till then it is the emblem of our strength and unity and national purpose, and we must strengthen it in every way. That strength comes from day to day service of the

masses and by developing their initiative and habits of democratic discussion.

It is patent that for a Congress Committee to condemn a Congress Ministry is both improper and absurd. It is as if one Congress Committee condemned another. The Ministries, being the creation of the Congress, can be ended at any time by the Congress. If they are not good enough, let us end them or mend them. If we are not prepared to do so, then let us put up with them. Therefore condemnation is out of the question. If we think at any time that they ought to go, then we should take the proper steps under our Constitution to bring this about.

On the other hand, for Congress Committees and Congressmen to become silent and tongue-tied spectators of the doings of Congress Governments would be equally absurd. Vital subjects, like the agrarian problem, will be considered by the Legislatures, and all of us are, or should be, interested in these. Congress Committees have every right to discuss them and send their suggestions and recommendations and popular demands to the Provincial Congress Committee concerned. That course should prove helpful both to the Legislature and the Provincial Congress Committee. Friendly criticism or suggestion should always be welcome; it is the friendliness and mode of approach that matter. Any attempt to embarrass the Congress Ministries and put difficulties in their way will end in embarrassing ourselves. We are all soldiers in the same cause, comrades in the same great enterprise, and whether we are ministers or village workers, we should deal with each other in a spirit of co-operation with a desire to help and not to hinder. But we have to be vigilant also and ever alert, and not permit complacency to creep in, deadening our public activities and gradually crushing the spirit of our movement. It is that spirit and the public activity that results from it that counts, for only that can supply the driving force to carry us forward to our goal, and only on that can we base a structure of democratic freedom. The small gains that may come to us will be of little consequence if they come at the cost of that spirit.

We aim at national independence and a democratic State. Democracy is freedom but it is also discipline, and we must therefore develop both the freedom and the discipline of democracy among our people.

*August 30, 1937.*



## *The A.I.C.C.<sup>1</sup> and Congress Ministries*

THE recent meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Calcutta was the first meeting held since the formation of Congress Ministries in various Provinces. Inevitably the work of these Ministries came up for discussion and review. Such a review is, in the nature of things, beset with difficulties. These difficulties increase because we have no rules or conventions for the purpose. We are on new ground, and, though we might adjust ourselves to it in course of time, we may not pitch our tents on it, for our resting-place is yet afar and we must ever keep moving towards our objective. It is clear that Congress Ministers have to follow Congress principles and to govern themselves by the general directions issued by the Congress or the All-India Congress Committee or the Working Committee. It is also clear that it is not possible or desirable to interfere in the day-to-day work of the Ministries, or to call for explanations from them for administrative acts, unless some important principle is involved. Even when such explanations are necessary, it is not always easy to discuss them in a public forum like that of the All-India Congress Committee. We have thus to strike a mean—to keep the control of the policy in the hands of the A.I.C.C., and not to interfere too much in administrative matters. Where such intervention is considered desirable, the Working Committee should make inquiries and, if necessary, report to the A.I.C.C.

Our past history has been an agitational history, and we have developed as a semi-revolutionary organization. By

<sup>1</sup> The All-India Congress Committee. For fuller information on Congress and its committees see Appendix Cz.

our day-to-day activities, and especially through the great mass movements that the Congress has undertaken, we have released an enormous amount of energy among our people. That energy represents the strength of the nation, provided it is not frittered away but is directed in a disciplined way to consciously held objectives. To some extent it was directed in the past to constructive activity, but the background was largely agitational. That background has still to remain, as our struggle for freedom is likely to bring in the future severe conflicts with British Imperialism. Nevertheless, the acceptance of office and responsibility and the formation of Congress Ministries have changed considerably the aspect of our work. Our general attitude to these Ministries cannot be agitational in the old sense of the word; we cannot agitate against ourselves. We may and should, when necessity arises, criticize them or press them to further the Congress programme, but that criticism must be friendly and co-operative criticism. Any unfriendly or hostile attitude to them must inevitably react on the Congress organization and weaken it. Hostile criticism must logically lead to the changing or the ending of the Ministry. Circumstances might arise when this is necessary, and when this happens we shall take the step deliberately and after full consideration, realizing the consequences which will flow from our action. To indulge in any action on the spur of sentiment and without thought of the consequences is likely to lead us to trouble, out of which it may be difficult to extricate ourselves.

It is not an easy matter for the Congress organization, with its vast membership and past traditions, to adapt itself to new conditions. Contradictions and conflicts are inherent in the situation, yet perhaps we may tone them down to some extent with some more experience and adjust ourselves to the new scheme of things. But that scheme has no permanence in it, for our very acceptance of office is limited and circumscribed by our pledge to combat and end the new Constitution and to produce the conditions and the strength in the nation for a constituent

assembly to meet and frame the Constitution for an independent India.

Our primary objective is thus, and must remain, to increase the strength of the Congress, and through it of the nation. In this task, unless there is the fullest co-operation between the Congress organization and the Congress Ministries, difficulties will continually crop up and a measure of failure might also attend our efforts.

The Ministries are in an unenviable position. They are tied up in many ways by the Constitution, and their resources are limited and largely mortgaged in favour of British imperialist and other interests.<sup>1</sup> They have to function through permanent services which cannot be expected to get out of their old ruts and traditions and get

<sup>1</sup> Under the Government of India Act of 1935 the powers of provincial Ministries in relation to financial affairs are severely restricted. No Bill for imposing or increasing a tax, or for regulating the borrowing of money, may be introduced except on the recommendation of the Governor (Section 82 of the Act). Estimates of expenditure must be submitted to the Legislature as expenditure charged upon the revenues of the Province and other expenditure. The former includes all emoluments in the higher services (which are fixed by the Secretary of State), debt, sinking fund, and redemption charges. Estimates for such expenditure will not be submitted to the vote of the Legislative Assembly, and the Assembly may not *discuss* "the salary and allowances of the Governor" (Section 79). Estimates for other expenditure may be submitted to the Assembly in the form of demands for grants, the demands being made on the recommendation of the Governor. The Governor has also vast overriding and preventive powers, which, if used, reduce Ministries to a nullity. Currency, Army, Railways, Posts and Telegraphs, Customs, are all Federal subjects, so that provincial Ministries cannot economize in or draw increased revenue from these departments. At the Centre the powers of the Finance Minister when federation comes into being are restricted. At present the Centre is a completely autocratic Government; finance is always in the hands of one of the English members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and the Reserve Bank of India is outside popular control. The Central Legislative Assembly has no powers over finance. It may reject a Budget or any item, but the Viceroy can and does "certify" the measure, thus imposing it authoritatively.

(A recent instance of this is the rejection of the Supplementary Finance Bill [War Budget] by the Central Assembly, October, 1940.)

in tune with the new order, however much they might loyally carry out the directions issued to them. Sometimes that loyalty itself might be lacking. With all these and other handicaps, the Ministers have to face tremendous tasks—the legacy of a long period of inaction or wrong action on the part of previous Provincial Governments. Urgent and vital problems shout for solution, and the very spirit we have evoked in the masses demands such a solution. Delay on our part in effectively dealing with these problems irritates many of our own people, who have no clear conception of the difficulties and obstructions in our path, but who are naturally eager to get things done. Demands also come from a host of individuals for petty personal attention or to remove individual grievances, and they cannot always be ignored. Administrative work absorbs a great deal of time. And so the big things are thrust into the background, and this again gives rise to complaints.

It is an embarrassing position for our Ministers. On the one hand, they have to face the inherent contradictions and obstructions which flow from the present Constitution; on the other, they are responsible to and have to satisfy all manner of people and committees. They are responsible to their electorates, to their party in the Legislature, to the Provincial Congress Committee and its executive, to the Working Committee, and to the All-India Congress Committee. Even local Congress Committees think it their function to have their say in the work of the Provincial Government. All this sounds very complicated and confusing, and yet in reality it is not so. What is the responsibility to the electorate? That electorate plumped for the Congress candidates, not because of their individual merits, but because they represented the Congress and its programme. Nothing could be clearer than this. The vote was for the Congress. Every single Congress member of the Legislature today, if he was unwise enough to backslide and seek election again in opposition to the Congress, would be defeated by a Congress candidate, whoever he might be. It is to the

Congress as a whole that the electorate gave allegiance, and it is the Congress that is responsible to the electorate. The Ministers and the Congress parties in the Legislatures are, in their turn, responsible to the Congress, and only through it to the electorate. The Congress, though it functions through a host of committees, is essentially one and has one basic policy. There are thus no conflicting allegiances for Congress Ministers or Congress parties in the Legislatures. That basic policy is laid down by the annual session, and it is interpreted and implemented by the A.I.C.C. The Working Committee, as the executive of the Congress, is charged with the carrying out of this policy.

The A.I.C.C. should therefore consider the broad lines of policy and discuss questions of principle. The Working Committee can, whenever necessity arises, go into greater detail and review the work of the Ministries. For the A.I.C.C. to discuss the details of administrative action is obviously not possible, for the A.I.C.C. is a public forum, and such acts cannot be discussed with advantage in public by large committees. It would be unfair to the ministers to ask them to make public statements about all the details of their administrative work.

To some extent this procedure would apply to the Provincial Congress Committees also. It is necessary and desirable that the Ministers should keep in the closest touch with the Provincial Committees; for these committees are the channels through which they reach the electorate. If they lose touch with the P.C.C.s, they lose touch with the Congress organization and with the electorate. But the P.C.C. is too big a committee for any detailed discussion or for any criticism of the Ministers to be effectively met by them. The executive of the P.C.C., however, is a small, compact body, and the Ministers should take this more into their confidence. We have been directed to co-ordinate our activities outside the Legislatures with those inside. This can only be done effectively if the P.C.C. executive is in close touch with the Ministries. The P.C.C. should also give publicity to

the achievements of the Ministries and to their future programme.

Local Congress Committees have every right to make suggestions to and even friendly criticisms of Ministers, but anything savouring of hostile criticism by them should be avoided. Such local committees are seldom in possession of all the facts, and it would make the position of the Ministers intolerable if we were to require them to appear before local committees and to furnish explanations to them. If a local committee has complaints or doubts, it should refer to the provincial executive, which, in its turn, in important matters, might make a reference to the Working Committee. But Ministers should, of course, get into touch with local committees wherever they go, and thereby find out the views of Congressmen in general and the public.

The Ministries have especially to face two sets of problems: those relating to civil liberty and those appertaining to agrarian and labour conditions. The latter have obviously the larger mass significance, and yet the former have importance, as civil liberty is the basis of all progress. For us the loss of many forms of civil and personal liberty have given the problem a special importance, and made the removal of its obstruction a first objective. There is strong feeling in the country on this point, and the Calcutta meeting of the A.I.C.C. gave expression to it. The strangling of Bengal,<sup>1</sup> with her detenus and intern-

<sup>1</sup> When the Congress Ministries assumed office in 1937, one of their first tasks was to effect the release of political prisoners imprisoned for participation in the Indian national movement. In Bengal the problem was of greater magnitude than elsewhere since (1) the repression in Bengal had been far more severe and widespread and over a considerably longer period. (2) There were large numbers of detenus still in prison camps without trial. (3) Many of these prisoners were alleged to be terrorists, and this was used as an excuse for not releasing them, on the grounds of "danger to the community." (4) The Congress was not in office in Bengal and the Ministry of Mr. Fazlul Huq, which is opposed to the Congress, relied on the European vote in the Assembly and followed the general line of pre-1937 Governments on political issues. The Bengal Government did not approach the problem of political

ments and externments, and bans on organizations, and ticket-of-leave persons, and hosts of political prisoners, oppresses the whole of India. Perhaps one of the most potent methods of helping our comrades in Bengal is to have a clean sheet in regard to civil liberty in the provinces controlled by Congress Ministries. Already the contrast between the two is great. The wider the gap, the more we demonstrate the futility and incompetence of the policy of repression.

We have stood for civil liberty and made it one of our fundamental rights. As a people claiming to be progressive we must necessarily do so. This is the only correct policy. But we have another important reason for doing so—our policy of non-violence. That policy was deliberately adopted by us in our struggle for freedom, and we have stuck to it through all these years. We must continue to adhere to it and apply it to those who may be opposed to us or critical of us when we control the Provincial Government. Even the wrongdoers must be approached non-violently, for a violent suppression of wrongdoing does not end it. Thus a Congress Ministry must avoid, as far as it possibly can, the use of the coercive apparatus of the State. It should approach the wrongdoer and try to win him over and point out the evil

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prisoners in the same way as the Congress Ministries and use their powers to order a general release.

In July, 1938, eighty prisoners in Bengal jails went on hunger strike for "immediate and unconditional release." The Government had already released 3,000 detenus (untried) and 200 convicted political prisoners, but refused to order further releases. In<sup>2</sup> December, 1938, after negotiations with Mahatma Gandhi, the Government appointed a committee to consider further releases. After considering each case individually, 146 prisoners were released and *then* the Congress members felt obliged to resign from the committee owing to grave differences with the Government representatives. Public opinion was almost entirely on the side of the Congress members who resigned and of the hunger strikers, who subsequently gave up their strike in response to the appeals of Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Rajendra Prasad. The Government then continued its policy of individual releases, but the problem of political prisoners in Bengal is still unsolved.

consequences of his act. Even if this approach is not successful, coercive action should be avoided unless dangerous consequences are feared.

It is clear that, in spite of every desire to avoid it, coercive action may become necessary in particular cases. This will not be for sedition as such, for sedition is no crime for a Congressman, and all of us may be considered guilty of it in varying degrees. Violence or dangerous incitement to violence and communal strife cannot, however, be tolerated by any State. Even in such cases the personal approach should be a pre-requisite, and our constant endeavour should be to create an atmosphere which does not encourage the violent approach to problems. Violent suppression of individuals or groups or ideas militates against this atmosphere, and so, though it might be momentarily successful, it adds to the difficulties. Thus not only our policy and pledges, but also expediency, tell us that the widest extension of civil liberty is desirable. Congress Ministries will have to go to the furthest limit possible in removing present restrictions and the laws which impose them.

*November 4, 1937.*



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*A Survey of Congress Politics, 1936-39*

I

THE sun was setting as I trudged back, with Kripalani for my companion, along the dusty road from Segaon to Wardha. We had met and parted that evening of the 22nd of February at Segaon, those of us who had for so long been the members of the Working Committee of the Congress, and the long argument was over. There was a relief from the tension of indecision, but the relief did not bring peace of mind or freedom from apprehension. We wandered about the Ashram in no great hurry to go back, for our work for the moment was over. Meanwhile our colleagues took possession of our two cars and rolled away to Wardha, each car-load imagining that we were in the other car. So we were stranded in Segaon. For an hour we waited and played with the children at the Basic school nearby, but no car came and we decided to walk back the five miles to Wardha.

How many times I had gone along that dusty path during the past three years, mostly by automobile, sometimes by bullock-cart, once or twice on foot. The scene was a familiar one, with the bare arid plain stretching on every side and hardly a tree in sight. Yet it seemed different, perhaps because I myself had changed and looked at it with different eyes. The sun hung like a ball of fire on the horizon and beauty filled the silent air, but I was in no mood for beauty and felt weary and depressed. Loneliness gripped me in that empty plain and the lengthening shadows seemed ominous. We walked silently, for neither of us was in a mood for conversation. I was walking away not from Segaon but from something bigger, more vital, that had been part of me these many years.

The newspapers say that I have resigned from the

Working Committee. That is not quite correct and yet it is correct enough. When twelve members had resigned from a committee of fifteen, there was not much of the committee left; the rump could hardly function as such. The reasons that impelled me to act as I did differed in many ways from those that moved my colleagues. But apart from reasons, I felt an overwhelming desire to be out of committees and to function as I wanted to, without let or hindrance. It was easy enough to resign from a dying committee whose days were numbered, but the problem in my mind was a deeper one and the step I took would mean a break from many other contacts. To the onlookers I had aligned myself along with the resigning twelve. And so I had. And yet in my mind the gulf between them and me had grown and not again would I be a member of a committee fashioned as the Working Committee had been for three years.

It surprises me that some people should criticize these resignations. There was no other possible course open to these members, or at any rate to several of them, after the charges that had been made against them.<sup>1</sup> Ordinarily, if it was felt that the policy they represented was not approved by the majority, they had to resign. But in the present instance certain grave personal charges were also made against them, and it was quite impossible for them to continue so long as those charges remained. In effect, these charges might be considered to be made against Gandhiji himself as he had been the guide and mentor of the Working Committee. This psychological and personal aspect inevitably overshadowed even the political issues, and I suggested therefore to the Congress President to clear this obstacle before tackling other problems. Unhappily he did not do so. To add to this difficulty the President sent a telegram asking for a postponement of the Working Committee and not permitting it to transact even routine business. It was clear that under the circumstances the Committee had ceased to be.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See note 1, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> For further information see pp. 128, 129, 132, 133.

A great organization has something impersonal about it, although it might be powerfully impressed by a dominant personality. It carries on though persons may come or go. The Congress has demonstrated this impersonal aspect in a unique manner during past years, when repeatedly all its leaders and principal workers were in prison and the whole might of the law was directed against it. Yet it carried on and showed that sure sign of inner strength which is not daunted by adversity or crisis.

It was obvious that the Working Committee could not and should not, under the existing circumstances, decide any controversial matter of importance or attempt to frame resolutions for the Congress Subjects Committee. In the absence of the President this would have been improper, and every member present realized this fully. But it was in the fitness of things that routine matters, and especially those demanding urgency, in view of the approaching Congress sessions, should be disposed of. But the President's instructions seemed to come in the way, though whether he meant his words to be interpreted so literally I do not know. And so the Committee, having no function to perform, dissolved and faded away. For the first time the Congress had not functioned impersonally.

When the scales are evenly balanced even a little makes a difference, and the President's telegram made a difference. Ordinarily the democratic way was for the old Committee to resign after the Presidential election and all that had happened in the course of it, so as to enable a new and more representative Committee to be formed. But the rapid development of an internal and external crisis, and the possibility of another struggle on a vast scale, overshadowed the usual processes of democracy and made the decision difficult. When, however, it appeared to the members present that there was no confidence in them even in regard to routine matters, the possibility of co-operation in a small executive became remote. The personal element was displacing the impersonal character of the organization. Personal loyalties began to count more than loyalty to the organization.

But this was a small matter after all and would not have counted for much if the surrounding circumstances had been different. It led me to think of a defect in our present constitution which leaves the old Working Committee to function with the new President. It would be far better if the Committee's term expired with the Presidential election and the President met the Congress with a new Committee. The proceedings of the Congress would then be in the nature of a vote of confidence in this Committee. Under the present constitution the Committee is constituted after the Congress is over, and it is quite possible that it might not truly represent the Congress.

And so, with all manner of thoughts surging in my mind, I walked back to Wardha town from Segaon. I had sided with my old colleagues of the Committee on the issue of the moment, for that was the only right course for me, but my parting was with them more than with others. In their letter of resignation they had stated that "the time has come when the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise between incompatible groups of the Congress." If that was to be their clear-cut policy, I had no place with them.

## II

If the Working Committee was to consist solely of people believing in a clear-cut policy, where did I come in? Of course the Committee must be homogeneous and capable of functioning as a unit or else it would be ineffective. It must believe generally in one line of action. But if the homogeneity was to be interpreted in a sectarian sense, then a future Committee would be very different from the Committees that have functioned during the past twenty years. Where would Deshbandhu Das<sup>1</sup> or my

<sup>1</sup> "Deshabaddhu Das"—Mr. C. R. Das, perhaps the most eminent lawyer in Calcutta, in his day renounced a fabulous income at the Bar and joined the Congress and the non-co-operation movement in 1920. He is sometimes spoken of by foreign writers as Mr. Gandhi's most outstanding convert. With Motilal Nehru,

father or Maulana Mohamad Ali<sup>1</sup> have been under the new interpretation? They would have found no place in the Working Committee. In the early days of the Swaraj Party<sup>2</sup> vital differences arose even as regards the policy to be pursued. There was an attempt to form a "homo-

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the author's father, Mr. Das was engaged in the shaping of Congress policy in the years which followed the 1920 and 1921 non-co-operation campaigns and the creation of the Swaraj party, the Congress parliamentary party of those days, which, however, was not an integral part of the Congress though composed exclusively of Congressmen. (See also note 2 below and note 1, p. 91.)

"Deshbandhu"—literally, "friend of the country"—means "patriot." The title, like "Mahatma" for Gandhi, is derived from the people.

<sup>1</sup> "Maulana Mohamad Ali" is perhaps the best-known name among leaders of the Moslem faith in India. At one time he was in Government service. Later became editor of the *Comrade*, which was suppressed by the Government during the last war, and was interned with his brother Shaukat Ali. Popular agitation led by Mrs. Annie Besant in the days of the "Home Rule movement" led to their release. The Ali brothers, as they are usually known in India, became national figures. Mohamad Ali, with his brother, initiated the Khilafat movement at the end of the war and joined the civil disobedience movement. He became the most outstanding protagonist of Hindu-Moslem unity. He was one of the pallbearers of Balgangadhar Tilak, who was a Chiptavan Brahman. The politics of the Ali brothers subsequently changed, but they were at all times staunch patriots. In 1930, while declaring its aim to include the independence of India, the Khilafat movement decided to co-operate with the Round-Table Conference and Mohamad Ali came to London. He was a sick man at the time and died in London in 1930. Mohamad Ali was as passionately religious as he was patriotic. The personal relations of the Ali brothers with the Nehru family were always very close, and Mohamad and the author were great friends and co-workers.

<sup>2</sup> "Swaraj party," formed in 1923 after the abandonment of the civil disobedience movement in 1922, during which Congress had boycotted the Legislatures. Under the leadership of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr. C. R. Das, Congressmen felt that the opposition to the Government should be carried on in the Legislatures. A Legislature party was created—the Swaraj party. The Congress contained two wings at the time, popularly called pro-changers and no-changers. The no-changers, who were regarded as full Gandhians, formed then the bulk of the Congress. C. Rajagopalachari, recently Premier in Madras and now best-known for his

geneous" Committee but it failed soon afterwards, and the Congress reverted to a joint Committee consisting of representatives of the two principal groups<sup>1</sup> in it. They functioned effectively for a number of years in spite of a difference of outlook. Any other course would have led to ineffectiveness and continuing conflict between the two groups and the weakening of the Congress.

If a new principle was now followed, odd individuals like me would be out of place in the Committee. I would not fit in with the old Committee which I knew; still less would I fit in with a new Committee which I did not know. My not being in the Working Committee would not of course mean that I sulked or held aloof. In any event I would, as would others, offer such co-operation as was possible and not obstruct in any way.

I am convinced that the right course for the Congress is to avoid sectarianism and this narrow so-called homogeneity, for they would lead to the growth of conflict and the spirit of opposition within the Congress. It is for the Congress to lay down its policy clearly and to ask for a strict adherence to it by its executive. Within the four corners of this there must be homogeneity, but any

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Parliamentary approach to politics, was then the fiercest anti-Parliamentarian in the Congress. The Swaraj party was not an integral part of the Congress but was composed of Congressmen in the Central Legislature, where it carried out Congress policy. The Swarajists were, however, not a breakaway section; they were good Congressmen, and men like Motilal Nehru and Das were among the most eminent Congress leaders of their day.

<sup>1</sup> The "two groups" were no-changers and pro-changers. The former wanted a continuance of Congress policy—no change—of boycott of the Legislatures and carrying on the struggle outside only with the masses. The latter wanted a change and the creation of a Legislature party and the utilization of the Legislature. A split in the Congress was avoided by Mr. Gandhi permitting freedom of action to the pro-changers and also by the able leadership of the Swaraj party under Motilal Nehru and Das. The Swarajists finally withdrew from the Legislatures a few years later as a protest against the British Government's policies and because they realized that they could carry on the opposition better by doing so.

attempt to narrow this still further would result in the exclusion of vital elements.

This policy of a joint front, though inevitable for us under the circumstances,<sup>1</sup> has its disadvantages, as it leads to a feeling of suppression in the two or more groups that co-operate together. Each feels that it cannot have its way and that its progress is obstructed by the other group. This feeling of suppression has grown during the past few years, and so it is perhaps desirable to have executives consisting of one group only in order to give them full play. In effect this will make little difference as there is not too much choice of policies and soon after there is bound to be a reversion to the joint Committee, which alone can be really representative of the Congress and the country.

One need not therefore take the present deadlock<sup>2</sup> in the Congress too tragically, unfortunate as it is. It is a sign of the growth of our movement and it mirrors the ideological conflicts that are troubling the minds of large numbers of our people. But everybody knows that in any action that might have to be undertaken we shall hold together and a crisis, national or international, will find us united.

What is unfortunate is the manner in which this deadlock has come about, for it represents no clear conflict of ideals or policy. It is the outcome of a desire to control the Congress organization, whatever the policy. There has been a certain reaction against what was considered an authoritarian tendency in the Congress High Command, and yet, curiously enough, the new leadership is far more authoritarian than any during the recent history of the Congress. A radical policy for the Congress one can understand whether one approves of it or not. A line of

<sup>1</sup> The development of a "joint front" and the circumstances which make it imperative and desirable to India in the present state of her national movement are dealt with at length in Sections III and IV. They also deal with the difficulties with which Nehru himself was confronted and the conflicts in his own mind with regard to this joint front, which, more than once, very nearly led to his resignation from the presidency of the Congress.

<sup>2</sup> The "deadlock" here referred to is dealt with in full in Section VIII. Its background is covered by previous sections also.

action can be judged and accepted or rejected. But to ally radical slogans to authoritarianism is a wrong and dangerous trend. It is wrong because it leads people to think that strong language and much shouting are substitutes for action. It is dangerous because radical slogans delude the people and under their cover authoritarianism creeps in and entrenches itself. I do not think there is any chance of the Congress going this way for we are too much wedded to democratic processes, and we have, these many years, discarded the tyranny of strong language, which enervates, in favour of action that is effective and that makes for strength. Yet we may not grow complacent, for recent years have brought strange happenings in Europe, and we have seen the proud edifice of democracy fall before our eyes. Regretfully we recognize how easy it is to wean away an ill-informed and confused public and then to drive it towards wrong ends.

Therefore it becomes vitally necessary for us to be clear about our policy and our methods, to define with precision our attitude to national and international problems. The world changes and new problems arise, new questions have to be answered, and the well-worn and hackneyed phrases of yesterday may have little meaning today. We live in the post-Munich Age and the map changes from day to day and barbarism and black reaction triumph. Even as I write my mind is filled with that supreme tragedy of our time—the murder of Spanish democracy. It was not the rebels who killed Republican Spain, or traitors' hands that did it. Nor was it ultimately done to death by the Fascist Powers, much as they tried to do so. Britain and France must be held responsible for this, as for the betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia, and history long ages hence will remember this infamy and will not forgive them. The infinite sadness in the looks of the Czechs and the Spaniards, whom they deserted and betrayed and, in the guise of friendship and impartiality, drove to death and slavery, will haunt them from generation to generation.

This is the world we live in. And in India also the problems that are arising are perilously like those in



Europe. While we think still in terms of a straight fight against British imperialism, that imperialism changes its shape, and, not so sure of its strength, tries to meet the challenge indirectly and more dangerously. Reaction itself talks a different language and, using progressive phrases, exploits the unpolitical masses for its own ends. Communalism becomes even more definitely the citadel of the reactionary and the bulwark of imperialism.

Phrases and slogans have become dangerous companions in these days unless they are allied to clear thought and well-considered objectives and methods. Most of us seldom take the trouble to think. It is a troublesome and fatiguing process and often leads us to uncomfortable conclusions. But crises and deadlocks when they occur have at least this advantage, that they force us to think. Let us then profit in this way in our present impasse.

It is for this reason that I am venturing to put forward some thoughts and experiences of mine. In a changing and uncertain situation it is difficult for me to point with any confidence to a way out of the deadlock. It may be that this way will show itself sooner than people imagine. Meanwhile it might be worth while for me to trace the various tendencies that have developed in India during the last three years. In doing so I crave the indulgence of my colleagues of the old Working Committee, for it may be necessary for me to refer to certain happenings with which they are connected and which have so far been treated as confidential. I hope I shall not thereby abuse their confidence.

### III

In March three years ago<sup>1</sup> I flew back to India from Europe, president-elect of the Congress. My views and opinions were well known, and I was to some extent entitled to presume that the Congress electorate had expressed their approval of them. But I knew well that I

<sup>1</sup> In 1936.

could not presume too much, for elections are often governed by other considerations. No one could say that the Congress had turned socialist because the delegates had elected me their President. But this election did mean that there was a general desire for a more radical policy and that socialist ideas were spreading in the country. For the past year the Congress had been rapidly recovering from the reaction that had set in on the withdrawal of civil disobedience.<sup>1</sup> The elections to the Central Assembly had helped in the process and the more radical elements were chafing at the inactivity of the organization.

An organized Socialist wing had grown up, and with the intemperance and exuberance of youth it criticized and condemned the leaders of the Congress. It spoke often a language borrowed from Western Socialist literature, and which was seldom understood by the rank and file of the Congress. And so, though it won over some, it created a barrier against the many. The vast middle groups of the Congress, politically Left, socially vague and undecided, but generally pro-peasant, looked askance at this new type of propaganda which attacked their leaders. Some Socialists openly talked of replacing the old leadership, and evidently considered themselves as chosen by destiny for this purpose. They endeavoured to run their candidates for local Congress Committees, and the impression

<sup>1</sup> The civil disobedience movement was precipitated in the beginning of 1932 by the arrest of Mr. Gandhi on his return from London to India after the second Round-Table Conference. It passed the peak of its strength towards the end of 1932. Mr. Gandhi then called on his followers to devote themselves to the removal of untouchability. There followed a period during which civil disobedience was still the policy but no resistance was offered. By stages it was withdrawn. During this period the author was in prison undergoing a term of two years' imprisonment for speeches made in support of the political prisoners of Bengal and in condemnation of the reign of terror in that province. The Governor of Bengal at that time was Sir John Anderson. For many years Bengal had suffered from heavy repression. The civil disobedience movement was confined to Mr. Gandhi's own person and ultimately withdrawn by him. The conditions following this are dealt with in Sections III and IV.

grew that they wanted to capture and control them. From a democratic point of view they were entitled to do so, but this very attempt and their methods turned people against them, and the middle groups of Congress lined themselves in an opposing camp. Thus the very people to whom Socialism should have appealed were pushed away and made hostile. The Socialist group, instead of being the crusaders for a new idea, became to some extent a sect seeking power and creating opposition among those who did not fall in line with them. Under cover of Socialism purely personal local groups were sometimes formed, seeking office or positions of authority in the Congress.

The leaders of the Congress disapproved strongly of these developments. They disliked the intricate theories connected with Socialism and thought that Socialism was inevitably connected with violence, which was opposed to the basic principle of the Congress. Above all, they were irritated by the personal attacks and criticisms and sometimes reacted in kind.

I found this atmosphere of bitterness and conflict on my return. I was full at the time of the idea of Popular Fronts and Joint Fronts, which were being formed in some European countries. In Europe, where class and other conflicts were acute, it had been possible for this co-operation on a common platform. In India these conflicts were still in their early stages and were completely overshadowed by the major conflict against imperialism. The obvious course was for all anti-imperialistic forces to function together on the common platform of the Congress. Socialism was a theoretical issue, except in so far as it affected the course of the struggle, till political freedom and power were gained. There could be no Socialism before independence. It was true that vital differences might arise in regard to the methods and the means, but I was not myself troubled greatly over this matter. I was convinced that the Congress technique of peaceful action was the right method and must be pursued not only as a superficial policy, but as a fundamentally sound method which would lead us to our goal.

Some Socialists and Marxists, thinking in terms of Europe and its pacifists, tried to ridicule the method of non-violence. I am no admirer of European pacifists, and crisis after crisis has shown them to be not only totally ineffective, but often the unconscious tools of reaction and even warmongering. Theirs has been the negative passive attitude which surrenders to evil and violence because resistance would lead to a breach of their pacifist doctrine. Political surrender leads almost inevitably to moral surrender also.

But the non-violence of the Congress is the very opposite of this, and the basis of it was no surrender, political or moral, to what it considered evil. It involves, as all policies do, the acceptance of compromises when circumstances dictate them, but essentially, perhaps, it is more uncompromising than other policies. It is dynamic and not passive; it is not non-resistance, but resistance to wrongdoing, though that resistance is peaceful. In practice it has proved remarkably successful, not only in achieving visible results, but also in the far more important task of strengthening the morale of the nation and training the people for peaceful, disciplined, and united action.

Almost everybody, including the Socialists, accepted this as the national policy and realized that there was no alternative. It is true that some did so rather mechanically without accepting its implications and sometimes not acting wholly in accordance with it. So far as I was concerned, I had no difficulty in accepting it, although it was no article of faith for me, nor could I say that it would be applicable under all the circumstances. It applied fully to India and to our struggle, and that was enough for me.

I decided to devote my energies towards bridging the gulf between the old leaders and the new Socialist group. To some extent I was fitted for this task, as I had intimate contacts with both. I was convinced that India could not do without either of these groups, and there seemed to me no valid reason why there should not be the fullest co-operation between the two in the struggle against im-

perialism. The old leaders were tried men with prestige and influence among the masses and the experience of having guided the struggle for many years. They were not Rightists by any means; politically they were far to the Left, and they were confirmed anti-imperialists. Gandhiji, standing behind them and supporting them from outside the Congress organization, was, of course, a tower of strength to them and to the country. He continued to dominate the Indian scene, and it was difficult to conceive of a big struggle without him. The Socialists, though a small group and speaking for a minority, represented a vital and a growing section, and their influence was spreading, especially among the youth. I was akin to them in their ideology and their objectives, and to me and to many others they represented the future.

On the eve of the Lucknow Congress<sup>1</sup> we met in Working Committee, and I was pleased and gratified at the adoption by this Committee of a number of resolutions that I sponsored, and which seemed to give a new tone and a more radical outlook to the Congress. This increased my confidence in my capacity to keep the various groups in the Congress together. But the proceedings of the Congress itself weakened this impression; and I realized some of the difficulties in store for me. The Congress rejected some of my important recommendations and gave its full support to the old leadership. I stood in a minority in the Congress, and doubts assailed me as to whether I should continue as President. The formation of the Working Committee distressed me still more, as it emphasized the limitations within which I had to function. In theory the Committee had to be nominated by me, but I could not override the majority view of the Congress. I decided to resign from the Presidentship, and my last words at the open session, as the Congress was concluding, were to the effect that, after the glory of the last few days, I was sinking back into oblivion.

<sup>1</sup> The annual session of the Congress was held at Lucknow in 1936. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the session soon after his return to India from Europe.

## IV

The Lucknow Congress was over and a Working Committee was announced. I had decided, after much mental conflict, not to resign, as the consequences of resignation were serious and our whole organization might have been shaken up by it. I threw myself into the work before me and drew up schemes for developing the A.I.C.C. office and opening various departments in it. With these plans in my head I went to the first meeting of the Working Committee. No questions of principle or high policy were involved, and yet I was surprised to find that my proposals were viewed with suspicion by many of my colleagues. It was not that they objected to them, but they did not know where these developments might lead to. After long and exhausting arguments, certain more or less routine proposals were agreed to which should not have taken more than a few minutes.

I undertook some tours and visited, among other places, Bombay. Everywhere I spoke about the Congress programme,<sup>1</sup> as decided at Lucknow, and emphasized the need for strengthening the organization. In the course of my speeches I laid stress on the poverty and unemployment in India, and said that a true solution could only come through Socialism. But there could be no Socialism

<sup>1</sup> Congress policy in relation to the Government of India Act, 1935, is embodied in resolution 9, headed "Government of India Act" passed at the Lucknow session. It denounced the Act as an imposition "to the accompaniment of widespread repression and the suppression of civil liberties" and "designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and the exploitation of the people of India." Congress rejected the constitution and declared that no constitution imposed by outside authority or which curtails the sovereignty or denies self-determination can be accepted. Congress candidates for the ensuing elections to the provincial Legislature were instructed to fight the election on the basis of rejection of the constitution and the determination of the future of India by a Constituent Assembly and full national independence. For a full statement of the policy see election manifesto, Appendix A 1.

The agrarian programme of the Congress is contained in resolution 12. The author refers to his popularization of this programme in subsequent sections. For text see Appendix A 3.

without independence, and all of us had therefore to concentrate on the latter. I met with an enthusiastic and overwhelming response everywhere.

Early in July, 1936, there was another meeting of the Working Committee and I went to it heartened by the enthusiasm I had met with. To my surprise and dismay I found that some of my colleagues did not share this and they were full of apprehension at the developments that were taking place.<sup>1</sup> They offered their resignations from the Working Committee. (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the absentees from this meeting.) I was stunned. It appeared that they were deeply hurt at what they considered was a regular and continuous campaign against them, treating them as persons whose time was over, who represented ideas that were worn out, and who were obstructing the progress of the country. I was of course not said to be a party to such a campaign, but my ideological sympathy with some of those who indulged in it was taken as passive support of it.

All this surprised me greatly. There had been some foolish and objectionable speeches and statements by odd individuals, but that was no sufficient reason for the offer to resign. Perhaps it was the long background of bitterness and conflict which influenced my colleagues, although this was improving rapidly. To some extent there was a feeling that the Congress Socialist party was not playing fair. Three of their number were in the Working Committee and yet the party continued in a sense to play the part of an opposition. But the dominating reason at the time was, I think, a feeling that my speeches might scare away voters and thus affect adversely the general elections that were coming. Later it was realized that I was a fairly efficient election winner.

<sup>1</sup> The agrarian programme (Appendix A 3) broadened the basis of the appeal of the Congress and evoked the enthusiasm of peasants and workers. Nehru's Socialist speeches had the same effect. The mass awakening thus created heartened the author but had, apparently, a different effect on some of his colleagues, who did not share his Socialist faith or his views on economic organization or the rôle of the masses in the national movement.

Owing to the intervention of Gandhiji the resignations were withdrawn, but I returned from Wardha in a depressed frame of mind. I felt that I should resign and place the whole matter before the A.I.C.C. so that suitable arrangements could be made for future work. I sent a long letter to Gandhiji from Allahabad, from which I give some extracts below :

“Ever since I left Wardha I have been feeling weak in body and troubled in mind. Partly this is no doubt due to physical causes—a chill which has aggravated my throat trouble. But partly also it is due to other causes which touch the mind and the spirit directly. Since my return from Europe I have found that meetings of the Working Committee exhaust me greatly; they have a devitalizing effect on me, and I have almost the feeling of being much older in years after every fresh experience. I should not be surprised if this feeling was also shared by my colleagues of the Committee. It is an unhealthy experience and it comes in the way of effective work.

“I was told, when I returned from Europe, that the country was demoralized and hence we had to go slow. My own little experience during the past four months has not confirmed this impression. Indeed, I have found a bubbling vitality wherever I have gone, and I have been surprised at the public response. . . . I am grateful to you for all the trouble you took in smoothing over matters and in helping to avoid a crisis. I was convinced then, and am convinced now, that a break of the kind suggested would have had serious consequences for all our work, including the elections. And yet, and yet, where are we now and what does the future hold for us? . . . I have written at length, both in my book and subsequently, about my present ideas. Those views are not casual. They are part of me and, though I might change them or vary them in future, so long as I hold them I must give expression to them. Because I attached importance to a larger unity I tried to express them in the mildest way possible and more as an invitation to thought than as



fixed conclusions. I saw no conflict in this approach and in anything that the Congress was doing. . . ."

With the fixed intention of resigning and leaving the matter to the A.I.C.C., which was meeting next month in Bombay, I left for Sind. News reached me there of the Spanish Revolt, and I was greatly affected by it. I saw this rising developing into a European or even a world conflict. Crises on the biggest scale seemed to be at hand and India's part in these was to me a vital matter. Was I going to weaken our organization and create an internal crisis by resigning just when it was essential for us to pull together? My mind became tense with expectation and all thought of resignation left it.

In Bombay the Working Committee drafted the Election Manifesto<sup>1</sup> and this, curiously enough, was agreed to without much argument. A new atmosphere of co-operation surrounded us and the tension seemed to lessen. As a colleague remarked with pleasure, it was like old times again.

As the elections approached, all of us plunged into the campaign and our internal conflicts vanished for the moment. For many months I wandered about India and millions of faces passed before my eyes. I saw a thousand facets of this country of mine in all their rich diversity, and yet always with the unifying impress of India upon them. I sought to understand what lay behind those millions of eyes that stared at me, what hopes and desires, what untold sorrow and misery unexpressed. Glimpses came to me that illumined my vision and made me realize the immensity of the problems of the hundreds of millions of our people.

The elections<sup>2</sup> over, the A.I.C.C. decided to accept office

<sup>1</sup> The manifesto of August, 1936, included the following points: (a) Rejection of the 1935 Constitution; (b) the demand for a Constituent Assembly; (c) the establishment of national independence; (d) relief of the burdens of the peasantry; (e) the abolition of untouchability. See Appendix "A Call to the Nation" for text of the manifesto and relevant resolutions of Congress, which should be read together.

<sup>2</sup> February, 1937.

subject to certain conditions. The period of the interim ministries intervened. Then the Congress<sup>1</sup> took office in a number of Provinces, and this by itself released mass energy, and both the kisan and the worker woke up and began to play an aggressive rôle. New problems arose and internal conflicts, which had so far been largely ideological, took new shape. No one, not even the opponents of office acceptance, wanted to create crises for the Congress Ministries. But there was a continuous attempt to bring pressure upon them by strikes and kisan manifestations which embarrassed the Ministries greatly. In Behar the Kisan movement came into conflict with the Congress organization. Elsewhere also the high hopes that had been raised by the advent of the Congress Ministries not being fulfilled, dissatisfaction arose. The machinery of government was working in much the same way as of old, although various reforms had been introduced. In Madras especially the Congress Government functioned in some ways perilously like the old Government.

To some extent this was inevitable, as the old steel frame was still there circumscribing and restricting the activities of the Provincial Governments. But it was felt in ever-widening circles in the Congress that the Ministries could have functioned more effectively in accordance with our principles and that they were growing too complacent. There was not the full co-operation between the Ministries and the Provincial Congress Committees which was essential for effective progress, and various incidents occurred—the Nariman affair, the Batlivala arrest<sup>2</sup>—which added to the internal conflict. It is difficult for me to deal with all these matters in the course of these brief articles, or else I shall continue to write on and take too

<sup>1</sup> July, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> K. F. Nariman, a leading lawyer in Bombay, has been a prominent figure in the Congress since 1920. His reputation is highest in the city of Bombay. After the elections to the provincial Legislatures the question of leadership of the Bombay Legislature party arose. Mr. Nariman was one of the candidates, and was defeated by B. G. Kher, who afterwards became Premier. This led to an unhappy controversy, allegations by Mr. Nariman against

long a time to reach the present stage. Still, it is essential that the background of these incidents and of the Congress in 1937 should be kept in mind, and I shall therefore deal with these in a subsequent article.

The vague but general feeling of dissatisfaction took some shape in the A.I.C.C. meeting in October, 1937, and found moderate expression. Long-continued repression in Mysore State was also greatly resented, and a resolution,<sup>1</sup> which was not happily worded, was passed. These resolutions, and especially the Mysore one, were disapproved of by many members of the Working Committee, and Gandhiji, who was seriously ill at the time, was upset by them. He expressed himself at a meeting of the Working Committee in language unusually strong for him and condemned artificial combinations in the Congress. This could not go on, he said, and the organization must be one from top to bottom. He said that he would have to withdraw completely unless a change was made in the Congress and this drift stopped. What exactly he wanted done was not clear to me, but what was clear was that he strongly disapproved of what I had

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Vallabhai Patel and other Congressmen resulted in an inquiry, followed by disciplinary action against Nariman.

Mr. S. C. Batlivala, a young Socialist Congressman, was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment in Madras for sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. This section had been freely used by pre-Congress Governments against Congressmen, and its use by Congress much in the same way created much bitter feeling, and lowered the prestige of the Congress. Mr. Rajagopalachari, Congress Prime Minister of Madras, was bitterly attacked by Congressmen of the younger school up and down the country and in Congress committees. The incident and the question of the use of the section by Congress Governments was referred to the Working Committee. Mr. Rajagopalachari has not been very friendly to Socialism and its advocates by Congress Governments.

<sup>1</sup> In October, 1937, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution on the severe repression which was being carried on in Mysore by the Maharaja's Government. The Government had banned the hoisting of the national flag and there was firing on a crowd on April 26, 1937. The Congress resolution condemned the conduct and policy of the Mysore Government and supported the Mysore State Congress

done. I suggested that the A.I.C.C. should be recalled, as a crisis seemed imminent. Later it was decided to carry on as we were doing for the time being.

In the columns of the *Harijan*, Gandhi criticized the Mysore resolution and stated that it was *ultra vires* of the A.I.C.C., which meant that he condemned my action in allowing it to be discussed. This amazed me, for I was and am convinced that from a constitutional and legal point of view Gandhiji was wrong. I wrote to him and to the members of the Working Committee on the subject and intended issuing a Press statement, but ultimately refrained from doing so in order to avoid a public controversy. But more and more I felt that I could not carry on as a responsible member of the executive. I decided not to do anything to precipitate a crisis, but to drop out of the executive at the next Congress session which was approaching. I informed Gandhiji and some of my colleagues accordingly, and wrote to the same effect to Subhas Babu, who was in Europe then. (He had not been formally elected President then, although his election was certain.

At Haripura<sup>1</sup> we had suddenly to face the Ministerial crisis in the United Provinces and Behar,<sup>2</sup> and my decision not to belong to the Working Committee was shaken. Another consideration which affected me was that my not joining the Working Committee might be looked upon as if I was not desirous of giving my full co-operation to Subhas Babu. This had, of course, nothing to do with my decision, but I could not go about explaining this to everybody. I decided to join the Working Committee.

But I was ill at ease, and in April, 1938, I wrote to Gandhiji. I give some extracts from my letter: "As you know, I have been greatly distressed at the turn events have taken in Congress politics during the last six months. Among the matters that have disturbed me is the new

<sup>1</sup> The Haripura Congress, February, 1938, met under the presidency of Subhas Chandra Bose.

<sup>2</sup> Two Congress Ministers had resigned, and further resignations were imminent. Eventually the Governors gave way to Congress and the Ministers returned.

orientation of the Gandhi Seva Sangh.<sup>1</sup> . . . It is distressing to find that even the Gandhi Seva Sangh, which might have set a standard to others and refused to become a party organization intent on winning elections, had descended to the common level. I feel strongly that the Congress Ministries are working inefficiently and not doing much that they could do. They are trying to adapt themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it. But all this, bad as it is, might be tolerated. What is far worse is that we are losing the high position that we have built up, with so much labour, in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians. . . . Partly, of course, this is due to a general deterioration all over the world, partly to the transition period through which we are passing. Nevertheless, it does show up our failings and the sight is painful. I think there are enough men of good-will in the Congress to cope with the situation if they set about it in the right way. But their minds are full of party conflicts and the desire to crush this individual or that group. Obviously bad men are preferred to good men because the former promise to toe the party line. When this happens there is bound to be deterioration.

“For months past I have felt that I could not function effectively in India as things were going. I have carried on, of course, as one can always carry on. But I have felt out of place and a misfit. This was one reason (though there were others also) why I decided to go to Europe. I felt I could be more useful there, and in any event I would freshen up my tired and puzzled mind. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> “Gandhi Seva Sangh” literally means Gandhi Service League, primarily concerned with the service of the community in the social sphere, such as the removal of untouchability, village reconstruction, and village industries. It is composed of those who profess social belief and aptitude for working on lines laid down by Mr. Gandhi. It is now non-political, Mr. Gandhi himself having stated that Gandhi Seva Sangh people should not take office in Government or in Congress. So far as is known, the organization was not founded by Mr. Gandhi, nor has he assumed responsibility for it.

In this letter I have referred to the Gandhi Seva Sangh. On subsequent inquiry I found that there was no such political orientation at the top as I had been led to believe. The fault lay with certain individuals in local areas who tried to exploit Gandhiji's name as well as that of the Sangh in Congress elections.

## V

The working of provincial autonomy, restricted as it was, had many dangers for us. It tended to emphasize, as it was no doubt meant to, provincialism and diverted our anti-imperialist struggle into narrower channels. Because of this, internal conflicts grew—communal, social, and organizational. The major problems of poverty, unemployment, the land, industry, clamoured for solution, and yet they could not be solved within the framework of the existing constitution and economic structure. The only course open to us was to go as far as we could towards this solution—it was not very far—and to relieve somewhat the burdens on the masses, and at the same time to prepare ourselves to change that constitution and structure. A time was bound to come when we would have exhausted the potentialities of this constitution, and have to choose between a tame submission to it and a challenge to it. Both involved a crisis. For if we submitted, the major problems, finding no solution or outlet, would overwhelm us. If we did not—and we had no intention of doing so—a conflict with British Imperialism was inevitable unless the latter surrendered, which it was not likely to do. There was an odd possibility, however, that if the national movement grew powerful enough, and in view of the critical situation, we might gain our objective without a major struggle.

Our strength had certainly increased greatly, and in spite of internal conflicts and sometimes bogus membership, there is no doubt that the Congress is a more powerful organization today than at any previous period of its history. The masses are more politically awake than ever before. Yet these very signs of strength may turn against

us if they are not organized and directed into right channels. For the moment I am not considering the communal problem, in spite of its obvious importance and its repercussions on our national struggle.

We had to deal with, both in the Organization and in the provincial governments, the co-ordination of the political struggle with the social and economic problems of the masses. Failure to integrate the two meant weakness and a growing paralysis. On the one hand, we had to keep our struggle predominantly political and anti-imperialistic; on the other, we had to go as far as we possibly could in the direction of social advance. Above all, it was essential that the Congress must continue to be a disciplined, well-knit organization, keeping the various aspects of the struggle well under control. If the Congress weakened there was no possibility of effective struggle for us.

As I have indicated, I was dissatisfied with the progress made by the Congress Ministries. It is true that they had done good work, their record of achievement was impressive, the Ministers were working terribly hard and yet had to put up with all manner of attacks and criticisms, often based on ignorance. Theirs was a thankless job. Still, I felt that progress was slow and their outlook was not what it should be. Nor was I satisfied with the approach of the Congress leadership to the problems that faced us. It was not so much a question of difference of opinion as of emphasis, though there was difference of opinion also sometimes. What alarmed me was a tendency to put down certain vital elements which were considered too advanced or which did not quite fit in with the prevailing outlook. This was a dangerous drift, though it had not gone far, and it reminded me of the fate of the German Social Democrats and the British Labour Party.

It is true that some of the so-called Leftist elements in the Congress had not behaved with responsibility and had deliberately encouraged tendencies which could only lead to internal conflict and the weakening of the Congress.

Their idea of a joint front was to have the full protection of the Congress, the advantage of its prestige, and yet to attack it and criticize it from outside. The Red Flag, perfectly justified in its own sphere, became often a challenge to the National Flag. The Kisan Sabha frequently functioned as a permanent opposition to the local Congress Committee and sometimes demonstrations were organized which could only lead to friction and irritation. Much of this took place in the lower ranks, but even the Kisan Sabha leadership was quite astonishingly irresponsible. In the villages, all manner of undesirables who had found no place in the local Congress, or were otherwise disgruntled elements, found shelter in a local Kisan Sabha. Even politically reactionary elements sometimes utilized the Kisan Sabha (Peasant Organization) to weaken the Congress.

All this led to petty conflicts, and what was worse, a growing spirit of indiscipline in the Congress. If this had represented the growth of an organized and disciplined Left, it would have been a healthy sign, whether one agreed with it or not. In effect it represented a healthy awakening of the masses which was being exploited by numerous mutually differing groups among those who called themselves the Leftists. For a considerable time the conflict among the Leftist groups themselves absorbed most of their energy.

Gandhiji was not interested in these ideological conflicts, but, with his extraordinary capacity to sense a situation, he felt that indiscipline was growing rapidly and chaotic forces were being let loose. He was thinking more and more in terms of a great struggle with British Imperialism, and indiscipline could not be the prelude to this. I was myself distressed by this development. It reminded me of various unfortunate stages of the Chinese Revolution, and I had no desire to see India go through that chaotic process.

The Nariman episode of 1937 and the Khare incident<sup>1</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Khare was Prime Minister in the first Congress Ministry in the Central Provinces. In May, 1938, there were differences of opinion in the Cabinet which led to four Ministers sending in their



1938 were symptomatic of this spirit of indiscipline. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was held to blame for both these most unjustly when the responsibility for them was fully shared by all the members of the Working Committee. As President of the Congress I was intimately connected with every step that was taken with reference to Mr. Nariman. President Subhas Bose was equally responsible for the decision regarding Dr. Khare.

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resignations to their Premier. The Working Committee of the Congress intervened and brought about a compromise, as a result of which the Ministers concerned withdrew their resignations (the Pachmahri compromise).

Dr. Khare had agreed not to take any precipitate action and to consult the Working Committee before he took action with regard to the reconstruction of Cabinets or resignations. The compromise, however, proved abortive. Internal difficulties persisted. On July 18 Dr. Khare resigned, and was followed by two of his colleagues. Dr. Khare took these resignations to the Governor. The Working Committee or the Parliamentary sub-committee were not consulted or informed.

The Governor accepted the resignations and dismissed the other Ministers, who refused to resign. Their view was that resignation of a Minister in a Congress Government was not an individual matter and, whatever the constitutional position might be, their allegiance was to the Congress.

On July 21 a new Ministry was sworn in. It was short-lived. Dr. Khare tendered his resignation again. The Working Committee had found him guilty of an error of judgment and gross indiscipline and declared that "he was not worthy of holding any office of responsibility in the Congress organization." A new party leader was subsequently elected at a party meeting of the members of the Legislature.

The All-India Congress Committee endorsed the actions of the Working Committee, to which Dr. Khare declined to make the necessary explanations when called on to do so. He was disqualified from Congress membership for two years, but would not resign his seat in the Central Provinces Assembly.

This incident was fortunately the only one of its kind in the history of Congress Ministries. It served to prove, however, the strength and the discipline of the Congress in the face of internal difficulties and external interference by British Governors.

Mr. Gandhi condemned the rôle of the Central Provinces Governor and referred to the indecent haste with which he accepted the resignations.

I think that there has been a certain tendency towards authoritarianism in the Congress. It might have been toned down, but to some extent it was inevitable when discipline was essential for us and there was danger of our far-flung organization going to pieces without it. Probably what was objected to was more the manner of doing than the thing done. In any event it was fantastic and absurd to talk about "Congress Fascism" because of what was done to Mr. Nariman or Dr. Khare. Politically speaking and from the Congress point of view, what Dr. Khare did was unpardonable. He came to an arrangement with the Governor behind the backs of the Working Committee on the eve of its meeting in order to present them with an accomplished fact. If that was permitted then all control over Congress Ministries vanished and Congress Ministers became a law unto themselves.

Mr. Nariman invited trouble. He seemed to consider it his birth-right to be made the Leader of the Party, and when this did not happen he started an agitation which continued for many months. This agitation amazed and astounded me. I had known Mr. Nariman fairly intimately ever since he joined the Congress in the twenties. I had seen him function in times of peace and in times of struggle and had formed some opinion of his virtues and his weaknesses. If I had been a voter for this purpose I would not have voted for him to be appointed Leader, as I did not think that he could have shouldered this burden adequately. Subsequent events have only confirmed this opinion and I have been surprised at the lack of responsibility he has shown.

But in any event, even if he was the better or more suitable person, the agitation which he and his supporters carried on was indefensible. Most unfortunate of all was the communal turn that was given to it. Similarly, in Dr. Khare's case an attempt was made to rouse Maharashtrian sentiment against the Congress.

There has been a great deal of talk of democracy being suppressed in the Nariman and Khare episodes. I presume those who say so have not troubled to study the facts,

or else our conceptions of democracy differ very greatly. It is easy to sneer and be sarcastic, and this seems the fashion today, not only among some Congressmen but among that large number who do little themselves but offer advice from a distance. I think that the Working Committee would have been completely failing in their duty if they had not expressed themselves clearly on both these issues. Democracy does not simply mean shouting loudly and persistently, though that might occasionally have some value. Freedom and democracy require responsibility and certain standards of behaviour and self-discipline. Our struggle, more especially the type of struggle we are carrying on, requires all these qualities, and if we do not possess them in sufficient measure we risk failure.

The Leftists, using the word correctly, stand for certain principles and policies. Inevitably they attract to their ranks all manner of people, both the finest type of crusading spirit and the intellectually and morally incompetent. If they do not take care they will be swamped by the latter, and lose the reputation that they should possess. It is not in indiscipline or in loose thinking or in irresponsible action that they will find success. The student world of India should be the nursery of new ideas and clear thinking and disciplined action. And yet unfortunately it often shows a lack of all the virtues that it should possess.

There is one matter I should like to refer to although it comes at a later stage in the narrative. This is the Trades Disputes Act of Bombay.<sup>1</sup> It is one of my regrets that I

<sup>1</sup> The Bombay Trade Disputes Bill was introduced by the Congress Minister on September 2, 1938. It contained certain excellent provisions, but was marred by some others which were an infringement of the rights of the workers. It provided for a period of compulsory conciliation, during which strike action was not permissible. It also sought to restrict in effect the free growth of trade unions by its clauses about registration, although this was not what was intended by the authors.

The legislation was conceived unhappily, and the manner in which it was carried through was equally unhappy. Workers'

was away from India when this was considered and passed. Perhaps, if I had been here I might have been able to have some changes made in it. The Act as a whole is decidedly a good measure, but it has, according to my thinking, certain vital defects which affect the workers adversely and take away from the grace of the measure. The manner it was passed was also unfortunate. On the other hand, it was equally unfortunate for the workers' representatives to ally themselves with the declared opponents of the Congress and to exploit the situation to the detriment of the Congress. Another attitude and approach would have yielded better results.

The Congress Ministries have certain definite and substantial achievements to their credit; they have failed in some ways. But one of their achievements which is full of promise is their new approach to mass education. The literacy campaigns have been good. More important and of fundamental significance is the new basic scheme of education which is based on the Zakir Hussain Committee's report.<sup>1</sup> I have been deeply impressed by it and I think we have found the right method to educate the growing generation.

## VI

My visit to Europe last year coincided with a period of intense crisis in the international sphere, and I put myself psychologically in tune with this by going straight to

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organizations in Bombay protested, there were demonstrations which the Government put down with force. However, the disturbance was far more limited than was the case when pre-Congress Ministries ruled. Pandit Nehru was unhappy about the whole affair, as he thought that a situation had been created where the Congress was behaving like previous Governments in dealing with workers. But he did not subscribe to the allegations made by certain opponents of the measure that the whole legislation was bad. It was obvious that the affair had been mishandled from both sides.

<sup>1</sup> This report embodied a scheme of education, which was introduced into schools (sometimes called "Basic Schools") that were selected by Congress.

Barcelona, that "flower of the fair cities of the world," as Cervantes called it. Alas, that this flower should be crushed today and enemy hands should hold this ancient home of liberty, which struggled for freedom even in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella! But when I visited this gracious city it was still the home of the unconquerable spirit of man which knows no defeat and reckons death and disaster as of little account in freedom's cause. Nightly I saw the bombs fall from the air, raining death and destruction on the populace. I saw the hungry crowds in the streets, the plight of the refugees; I visited the armies at the front and those brave young men of the International Brigade, so many of whom rest for ever in the soil of Spain. I came back full of the tragedy of Spain, which was being strangled not so much by enemies, but by those who called themselves the friends of democracy.

Later I visited Czecho-Slovakia and saw yet another tragedy, yet another betrayal, unroll itself before my eyes. All these events impressed themselves powerfully upon me and I tried to understand our own struggle for freedom in relation to them. In this swift changing drama Federation and many of the lesser problems of India seemed to lose importance. Bigger things were afoot and it was time that India also thought in terms of them.

I had gone to Europe in a personal capacity, but inevitably I had a certain representative character. In my public or private utterances I could not forget this, and I was anxious not to say or do anything which might embarrass my colleagues in India. I took care therefore to send full and detailed reports of all my political activities, public or private; I enquired if the line I had taken was the correct one, I asked for full directions and put questions to be answered. I sent several such reports, and copies of each one went to the Congress President,<sup>1</sup> to the General Secretary of the Congress for the members of the Working Committee, and to Gandhiji. It was my misfortune that the President did not even acknowledge any of them, and consequently I received no directions from him. The

<sup>1</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose.

General Secretary informed me that the Members of the Working Committee generally approved of the attitude I had adopted. Gandhiji also expressed his approval.

It was obvious that in the course of a discussion or conversation it is not enough to speak in terms of a brief Congress resolution, although that must be the basis of the discussion. All manner of possibilities have to be investigated and various developments considered in the light of the Congress decision. The purely agitational attitude is not good enough for a detailed consideration of a subject. It was because of this that I wanted full instructions from the Congress leaders in India. My own general attitude was that the whole question of Federation was out of date now and it was time that the Indian problem was solved by a Constituent Assembly drawing up a constitution.

I learnt that an attempt was being made behind the scenes in England to impress upon people that what I said about Federation did not represent the Congress or Gandhiji and that it was Gandhiji who counted in the end. I wrote to the Working Committee about it, as well as to Gandhiji. Gandhiji sent me a cable in reply expressing his agreement with what I had said. It is possible his language might have been different. He wrote an article in the *Harijan* about that time to the same effect.

The international crisis and the possibility of war also raised vital problems for us and I wanted directions from my colleagues at home. I got no directions from the President and little from the others in this matter. I felt from this and various other indications that the President did not wholly approve of the international policy I was advocating.

In view of the crisis and the rapid developments in Europe most of us, I suppose, were forced to think out afresh what their political faith should be. Perhaps this sense of crisis and tension was not so obvious in India and events did not compel us to examine our premises afresh. Our Socialist friends in India have not reacted sufficiently to changing conditions. The Communists in Europe

might change, under the compulsion of events, but not so the Communists of India.

I had been considerably upset by the course of events in the Soviet Union, the trials and the repeated purges of vast numbers of Communists. I think the trials were generally bona-fide and there had been a definite conspiracy against the régime and widespread attempts at sabotage. Nevertheless, I could not reconcile myself to what was happening there, and it indicated to me ill-health in the body politic, which necessitated an ever-continuing use of violence and suppression. Still the progress made in Russian economy, the advancing standards of the people, the great advance in cultural matters and many other things continued to impress me. I was eager to visit the Soviet Union, but unfortunately my daughter's illness prevented me from going there.

Whatever doubts I had about internal happenings in Russia, I was quite clear in my mind about her foreign policy. This had been consistently one of peace and, unlike England and France, of fulfilling international obligations and supporting the cause of democracy abroad. The Soviet Union stood as the one real effective bulwark against Fascism in Europe and Asia. Without the Soviet Union what could be the state of Europe today? Fascist reaction would triumph everywhere and democracy and freedom would become dreams of a past age.

On Spain, on Czecho-Slovakia, and right through the September crisis, the Communist Party<sup>1</sup> seemed to me to take the straightest line. Their analysis of the situation almost always turned out to be correct, and even when the nerves of most of the progressive groups were shattered, the Communists as a rule kept their heads and continued to function. They had the capacity to learn from events and to shape their policy accordingly, unlike the British Labour Party, which has shown an astounding inability to understand a changing world.

The events in Europe, the growth of Fascism, the Spanish Revolution, and most of all the deliberate encour-

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the British Communist party.

agement of the Nazi and Fascist Powers by the so-called democratic Governments of England and France, impressed upon me that the dominant urge of owning classes is to protect their own vested interests. When nationalism means protection of their interests, then they are nationalists and patriots; but when these interests are endangered, then nationalism or patriotism has little value for them. The ruling classes of Britain and France are even prepared to endanger the security of their empires rather than co-operate for the defence of democracy with Soviet Russia, for such co-operation might release forces which would undermine their privileged position. Democracy means nothing to them, nor freedom, though they talk loudly of them; their main concern is the protection of their vested interests and privileges. That they might lose these anyhow, even by the policy they pursue, is their misfortune.

The Marxian philosophy appeals to me in a broad sense and helps me to understand the processes of history. I am far from being an orthodox Marxist, nor does any other orthodoxy appeal to me. But I am convinced that the old Liberal approach in England or elsewhere is no longer valid. *Laissez-faire* is dead, and unless far-reaching changes are made with reasonable speed, disaster awaits us, whether we live in England or India. Today the community has to be organized in order to establish social and economic justice. This organization is possible on the Fascist basis, but this does not bring justice or equality, and is essentially unsound. The only other way is the Socialist way.

Liberty and democracy have no meaning without equality, and equality cannot be established so long as the principal instruments of production are privately owned. Private ownership of these means of production thus comes in the way of real democracy. Many factors go to shape opinion, but the most important and fundamental of them is the property relation, which ultimately governs our institutions and our social fabric. Those who profit by an existing property relation do not, as a



class, voluntarily agree to a change which involves a loss of power and privilege. We have reached a stage when there is an essential contradiction between the existing property relation and the forces of production, and democracy cannot effectively function unless this relation is transformed. Class struggles are inherent in the present system, and the attempt to change it and bring it in line with modern requirements meets with the fierce opposition of the ruling or owning classes. That is the logic of the conflicts of today, and it has little to do with the goodwill or ill-will of individuals, who might in their individual capacities succeed in rising above their class allegiance. But the class as a whole will hold together and oppose change.

I do not see why under Socialism there should not be a great deal of freedom for the individual; indeed, far greater freedom than the present system gives. He can have freedom of conscience and mind, freedom of enterprise, and even the possession of private property on a restricted scale. Above all, he will have the freedom which comes from economic security, which only a small number possess today.

I think India and the world will have to march in this direction of Socialism unless catastrophe brings ruin to the world. That march may vary in different countries and the intermediate steps might not be the same. Nothing is so foolish as to imagine that exactly the same processes take place in different countries with varying backgrounds. India, even if she accepted this goal, would have to find her own way to it, for we have to avoid unnecessary sacrifice and the way of chaos, which may retard our progress for a generation.

But India has not accepted this goal, and our immediate objective is political independence. We must remember this and not confuse the issue, for else we will have neither Socialism nor independence. We have seen that even in Europe the middle classes are powerful enough to suppress today any movement aiming at vital social change, and when danger threatens have a tendency to

go to Fascism. The middle classes in India are relatively at least as strong, and it would be the extremity of folly to estrange them and force them into the opposing ranks. Our national policy must therefore be one which includes a great majority of them on the common basis of political independence and anti-imperialism, and our international policy must be one of anti-Fascism.

Marxism and Socialism are not policies of violence, though, like most other groups, capitalist or Liberal, they envisage the possibility of violence. Can they fit in with the peaceful methods of the Congress, not only as a temporary expedient, but in a straightforward bona-fide manner? It is not necessary for us to discuss the whole philosophy underlying the doctrine of non-violence or to consider how far it is applicable to remote and extreme cases. For us the problem is that of India and of India of today and tomorrow. I am convinced that the way of non-violence is not merely the only feasible course for us, but is, on its merits, the best and most effective method. I think that the field of its application will grow as its effectiveness is recognized. But here in India large numbers of people have recognized it, and it has become the solid foundation of our movement. It has proved effective enough already, but it is quite possible, with further experience, to extend its applications in a variety of ways. It is easy to belittle it and point to its failures, but it is far easier to point out the innumerable failures of the method of violence. We have seen powerfully armed countries collapse and sink into servitude without a struggle. India, with all her lack of armed might, would never have succumbed in this way.

There are peculiar dangers in India in the use of the violent method. It cannot be used in a disciplined or organized manner. It will come in the way of mass organization and mass action, and it is bound to lead to internal conflicts on a big scale, resulting in chaos and the collapse of our movement. I am not optimist enough to imagine that out of this chaos a free, united, and advanced India will emerge.

No one in India thinks in terms of this type of violence. It is out of the question. But there is a feeling that a violent mentality increases the militancy of the masses and is therefore to be vaguely encouraged among the industrial workers or even the kisans. This is folly, and if continued the consequences are likely to be disastrous. So long as a Government deals gently with it, it flourishes, but a determined Government can crush it easily and completely demoralize the workers. Strength comes not from occasional exhibitions of individual or group violence, but from mass organization and the capacity for mass action, which, to be effective in India, must be peaceful action.

In any event the fact remains that the Congress policy is a peaceful one, and if we adhere to it we must do so fully and in all honesty. Not to do so is to fall between two stools. Any Socialist or Communist who pays lip service to non-violence and acts differently does injury to his ideals and makes people think that his acts do not conform to his professions.

## VII

We discuss our differences and sometimes over-emphasize them. Yet it is well to remember that our political movement for freedom has a fundamental unity, and all our differences of outlook and approach do not lessen this unity. That unity comes out most strikingly in times of struggle, but even at other times that unity is apparent. Our debates and arguments do not attack that unity; they are, in fact, based on that unity. This is natural enough, for under the circumstances the independence of India and anti-imperialism are the common urges which move vast numbers of our people.

Real disunity creeps in from the communal side, and we must recognize that there is an ideology, fostered by the principal communal organizations, which cuts at the root of national unity. Yet I do not think that this

ideology has affected to any large extent even the members of the communal organizations. As soon as there is an improvement in the communal atmosphere this way of thinking will probably fade out.

So far as the Congress is concerned there is no such difficulty. The real difficulty is not so much in what we do or even in the resolutions we pass, but in our approach and interpretation. There are, as there must be in a vital organization, numerous sets of opinions shading off into one another, and yet bound together by a common link. Broadly speaking, there are two divisions (and this has practically nothing to do with Right or Left): those who might be called the Gandhiites and those who consider themselves Modernists. These words are not happy or precise, for they indicate that Gandhism is something ancient and out of date, while as a matter of fact it is very modern and perhaps to some extent in advance of our age. But it is different from the modernism of the West, and a certain religious or metaphysical tinge about it does not fit in with the spirit of science which represents the best of European thought today. There is little stress on the mind in it or on the processes of the mind, and too much on an intuitive and authoritarian interpretation. And yet there is no reason why the Gandhian technique should not be considered from a purely scientific point of view and made to fit in with the spirit of science.

The so-called Modernists are a motley group: Socialists of various kinds and odd individuals who talk vaguely of science and modern progress. Many of these are relics of an out-of-date nationalism and have little to do with modernism or science.

These two broad divisions must not be confused with Right and Left. There are Rightists and Leftists in both groups, and there is no doubt that some of our best fighting elements are in the Gandhian group. If the Congress is looked upon from the Right and Left point of view, it might be said that there is a small Rightist fringe, a Left minority, and a huge intermediate group

or groups which approximate to Left-Centre. The Gandhian group would be considered to belong to this intermediate Left-Centre group. Politically the Congress is overwhelmingly Left; socially it has Leftist leanings, but is predominantly Centre. In matters affecting the peasantry it is pro-peasant.

In trying to analyse the various elements in the Congress, the dominating position of Gandhiji must always be remembered. He dominates to some extent the Congress, but far more so he dominates the masses. He does not easily fall in any group and is much bigger than the so-called Gandhian group. Sometimes he is the single-minded revolutionary going like the arrow to his goal and shaking up millions in the process. At other times he is static, or seemingly so, counselling others to prudence. His continuing ill-health has brought a complicating factor in the situation. He cannot take full part in national affairs and is out of touch with many developments; and yet he cannot help taking part in them and giving a lead because of his own inner urge to do so and the demand of the people. It makes little difference whether he is formally connected with the Congress or not. The Congress of today is of his making, and he is essentially of it. In any event, the commanding position he has in the country has nothing to do with any office, and he will retain that dominating place in the hearts of the people so long as he lives, and afterwards. In any policy that might be framed he cannot be ignored. In any national struggle his full association and guidance are essential. India cannot do without him.

That is one of the basic factors of the situation. The conscious and thinking Leftists in the country recognize it and, whatever their ideological or temperamental differences with him, have tried to avoid anything approaching a split. Their attempt has been to leave the Congress under its present leadership, which means under Gandhiji's guidance, and at the same time to push it as far as they could more to the Left, to radicalize it, and to spread their own ideology.

If this is so during more or less normal periods, still more is Gandhiji's guidance necessary when crisis approaches. A split, or anything like it, at such a critical period when all our united strength is necessary would disable us and make us ineffective.

While Gandhiji and the old leaders of his group are essential for our national work and our struggle, it is becoming increasingly evident that without the active co-operation of other vital elements in the Congress and the country they will be hampered and their work will be ineffective or, at any rate, less effective. This applies to the so-called Modernist group within the Congress; it applies still more to a large but vague body of opinion in the country, and to most of the intelligentsia. It may not apply directly to the masses, but indirectly the masses are affected by others of this way of thinking.

Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the full co-operation of this Modernist group is also essential for the successful functioning of the Congress. If bona fide co-operation between the two groups is lacking, it is difficult to think in terms of a struggle against the common opponent. There will then be no equilibrium in the Congress and our energies will be spent in internal conflict or, even if this is avoided, an atmosphere of mutual tension and want of confidence in each other will grow up, which is fatal for effective work. People at the top might behave and be tolerant of each other, but lower down in the organization indiscipline and conflict will be rampant. The Congress Ministries will be greatly affected by this and might find it difficult to carry on. They have a difficult enough task in having to face the disruptive tendencies of communalism.

Every line of thought leads to the conclusion that this united working of the Congress is essential. Is this impossible? Or are the elements composing it incompatible, as has been said? In answering this question we must not think in terms of individuals, but rather of broad policies. The past has shown that this unity of working can be achieved, though there are undoubted difficulties

in the way. I have no doubt whatever that there is an overwhelming desire in the rank and file of the Congress to have such co-operation and a united front. The difficulties that arose in the past, though real, were not fundamental. I venture to think that the fault lay on both sides.

The Congress cannot obviously be treated as a sectarian group. It represents the nation, and its doors are open to all who believe in its objective and its methods. At the same time it cannot possibly be treated as a kind of federation of groups, a common platform where conflicting opinions and methods are pressed forward for acceptance and attempts are made to arrive at a compromise which enthruses nobody. The Congress has been and is a fighting unit. It must remain so if it is to fulfil its historic purpose. Platforms cannot fight, howsoever joint they may be, nor can debating societies carry on effective struggles.

There has been a tendency in the Congress leadership in the past to become sectarian, narrow-minded, and exclusive. That is undesirable and creates barriers between it and large numbers of people in the Congress and the country. There has also been a marked tendency among these other groups to play the rôle of an aggressive opposition, to adopt methods not in line with Congress policy, to encourage indiscipline and irresponsibility, to weaken the homogeneity of the Congress, even while they talked of unity and united fronts. That way lies peril and disaster.

A time may perhaps come when the real conscious Leftists are strong enough to take charge of the Congress and run it according to their policy. Today they are not in a position to do so. They have neither the national backing nor the discipline for the job. There are numerous groups amongst them, each pulling its own way, with little love for each other, and united only for the moment by a common opposition, a link that will break soon enough. The Left today can destroy; it cannot build. They still live in a world of agitation, not fully realizing

that the Congress and the national movement have grown in stature and speak with authority and responsibility now.

Those among the Leftists who are Socialists must look at our movement in historic perspective and realize what the present stage of development requires. To over-reach the mark now might mean reaction tomorrow. If they are conscious of their historic rôle, they must prepare themselves for it and gain the confidence of the Congress and the country. Above all, they have to strive their utmost to check indiscipline and the forces of chaos, for out of these neither independence nor Socialism will emerge.

Any executive must be homogeneous, in the broad sense of the word, or else it will be ineffective. The executive of a fighting organization, like the Congress, must inevitably be homogeneous in this sense. But I see no reason why this homogeneity should be interpreted in a narrow sectarian sense. At the same time, every member of the executive must be loyal to it and must not sit there just as a representative of another group which commands his primary loyalty. In the past we had members of the Congress Socialist Party in the Working Committee. They continued to remain members of the executive of the C.S.P. and often they spoke in different voices. This seems to me to be undesirable, and a member of the Working Committee should not continue to belong to an executive of a party or group which may have occasion to criticize it. This does not mean a break with the other party, but the observance of a rule which will help us to function together, and which will give greater dignity to the Working Committee and its members.

Such were my thoughts when I returned from Europe last November<sup>1</sup> and reviewed the situation. I saw a crisis developing in the States and Gandhiji taking the lead, Federation and other issues hung in the air, our Provincial Governments seemed to be exhausting the possibilities open to them, and the future seemed dynamic. The international situation seemed as bad as it could be. I thought in terms of approaching crisis in India.

<sup>1</sup> 1938.



I felt that every effort should be made for the two main groups of the Congress to co-operate (and these groups, as I have said above, were not Leftists or Rightists). This co-operation should be based, broadly speaking, on the existing programme and methods of the Congress, and especially on an adherence to the policy of non-violence. The present leadership should not be markedly disturbed, but fresh blood should be brought in representing the so-called Modernist viewpoint. This was not meant to disturb the homogeneity of the Working Committee, but to spread out the responsibility of shouldering the burden of work and guiding the movement. Gandhiji's leadership and guidance were essential, and I believed that he would willingly give it on these conditions. Above all, we should all combine to put an end to the indiscipline and disruptive tendencies in the Congress. This was the essential preliminary to preparation for the struggle that was to come.

### VIII

Soon after my return from Europe in November I was asked about the Congress presidentship. Who was going to be President next year? Would I agree to accept office again? I had not given a moment's thought to the matter and was not particularly interested. But I was quite clear in my own mind that I would not stand for re-election. What occupied my mind was not the personality of the President-to-be, but the policy that the Congress should follow, both nationally and internationally. I did not know then that Subhas Babu was likely to stand again.

Some time later I had occasion to discuss this matter with Gandhiji. I gave it as my decided opinion that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad would be the right choice for the presidentship. He seemed to me just to fit in from every point of view. He could carry on the old tradition of the Congress and yet not in any narrow or sectarian way. He had breadth of vision, a deep understanding of events, and round him every section of the Congress would gather and offer co-operation. He represented to me the

ideal emblem of united working which I sought, especially at this critical juncture.

I learnt that Subhas Babu was thinking in terms of re-election. I did not like the idea for a variety of reasons. I disliked it for the same reason as I disliked my own election. I felt that both he and I could serve our cause much better without the burden of the presidentship. During the past year his presidentship had made little difference to the policy of the Congress, and he had functioned more or less as a chairman. He had taken hardly any interest in the A.I.C.C. office and the organizational side of the Congress, and this had led to a certain deterioration. The rapid growth of the organization required quick and efficient handling, and the A.I.C.C. office was unable to cope with this owing to the fact that the President was largely occupied with local and provincial affairs in Calcutta.

I felt instinctively that an election contest with Subhas Babu as a candidate would probably lead to various difficulties and to the creation of an atmosphere prejudicial to that united working which I deemed essential. To my mind the issue was not one of Left or Right. Indeed, so far as Gandhiji was concerned, he expressed his wish repeatedly in my presence that he would like a Socialist as President. Apart from my own name, he mentioned Acharya Narendra Deva's name. But, for the reasons I have indicated above, I did not like the idea of a Socialist being President at this stage. I wanted the burden to be shouldered by those who were primarily responsible for the policy to be followed, and I had no desire to change that policy radically then for fear of producing serious complications in our organization. I insisted, therefore, on Maulana's name. There was, so far as I know, no desire on anyone's part to keep out a Leftist as such or to insist on a Rightist President.

I had a talk with Subhas Babu on the occasion of the Working Committee meeting and told him how I thought about this matter. I presumed that he appreciated my line of reasoning.

Maulana Azad did not readily agree to our proposal. Extraordinarily sensitive and retiring as he is, it is no easy matter to push him forward in this age of conflict. Still, I thought he would ultimately agree, and, indeed, when I went to Almora I had the definite news that he had agreed. But soon after, probably because of the possibility of a contest, he decided to withdraw.

It was only on my way down from Almora, on the very eve of the presidential election, that I read the various statements that had been issued. I was pained to read them and fervently wished that all concerned might have suppressed the urge to issue statements to the Press and take the world into confidence. There seems to be a particular passion in India for all of us (I am an old and inveterate sinner in this respect) to rush with a statement to the Press, and our friends of the Press encourage us in this failing.

The charges that Subhas Babu had made in his statements regarding a conspiracy to accept Federation,<sup>1</sup> and even plans for the formation of Ministries, astonished me, for I had not heard anything about all this. If even a rumour to this effect had reached us, it was up to us to thresh it out in Working Committee. So far as I know, there was never any difference of opinion in regard to Federation in the Working Committee. Indeed, there was hardly any marked difference over any other matter, except to some extent about the formation of coalition ministries,<sup>2</sup> on which Subhas Babu held strong views, which I was unable wholly to share. But this was hardly a matter of principle.

I felt, therefore, that very unfair charges had been made on colleagues, and although no names were mentioned, the public would inevitably imagine that some members of the Working Committee were involved. This was a

<sup>1</sup> See Nehru's statement and the footnote on p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> The stand taken by the Congress on this issue has been fully justified by subsequent developments. Subhas Babu's handling of the Calcutta Corporation politics is now revealed as a major blunder and a blow to unity in Bengal (November, 1941.—Ed.).

new and serious development in the upper circles of our political life, and it meant the creation of difficulties which it would not be easy to overcome. A small group could hardly function together in a responsible position if there was utter lack of confidence and intrigue was suspected. If this happened at the top, what of the lower ranks of the Congress, and how was the growing indiscipline which was weakening our movement to be dealt with?

Later, after the President's re-election, he passed certain direct orders in provincial and local matters, sometimes over the head of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned. Some of these orders seemed to me to be wrong, but what filled me with apprehension was the manner in which all this was done. It seemed to me that our organization would suffer grievously if this method was followed. Then came the Working Committee meeting which could not be held.

The President's re-election was a tribute to his personality and popularity. It was the delegates' way of showing that they wanted a stiffening-up of our policy. It was also an expression of disapproval of what was considered authoritarianism at the top. It was not a defeat for Gandhiji, as he called it, but indirectly it might be considered a criticism of the Working Committee which had functioned under his guidance. The curious part of it is that the President himself had been responsible for what the Working Committee had done.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been right and proper for those members of the Working Committee who had been dubbed Rightists, and so condemned, to retire and be replaced by others. The fact that personal charges had been made against them of a serious nature made their position still more untenable.

What is to be done now? It would be somewhat presumptuous and a little premature for me to suggest what steps should be taken to resolve our internal crisis when unusual events and strange developments are taking place from day to day. The Congress President, on whom the burden primarily rests, is most unfortunately lying ill.

Gandhiji has today started a fast the consequences of which no one can tell.

But within a few days we meet at Tripuri and each one of us must shoulder his or her part of the burden and responsibility. We dare not shirk them. Let us hope that all of us will do so with forbearance and dignity, keeping ever in mind the cause for which we have laboured and the high purposes which have animated us. We shall take our part, great or small, in the decisions that will be made and abide by them in all loyalty. For the organization is greater than the individuals of whom it consists, and the principles we stand for are more important than personalities. We must avoid all personal bickering and private animosity, and view our problems from the high level which befits the Congress and the chosen representatives of the Indian people.

It would be easy and desirable for me, as for others, to make suggestions about matters of policy and programme. But for the moment other issues take precedence, and these affect the very structure and life of our great organization. There are no vital differences about policy or programme today, but even if there were such differences, our first concern must be to maintain the Congress as the representative organ of the Indian people and the effective fighting organization for India's freedom. If it ceases to be so, what do our resolutions matter and where does our brave talk lead us?

Many people talk about the weakness and vulnerability of British Imperialism today and imagine that if we shout loudly enough or threaten persistently, the walls of that citadel will fall down. British Imperialism is weak today and the Empire of Britain seems to be fading away before our eyes. The forces of evil and reaction dominate the world and are triumphantly aggressive, and British Imperialism lines up with them. But it is by no means so weak or vulnerable as our wishes lead us to think; outside the scriptures, shouting has not been known to bring down the walls of citadels or cities. We dare not underrate the strength of our adversary. If we win it will be by our

own strength, not the weakness of our opponent, for however weak he might be, he will always know how to profit by our lack of strength.

It is a patent fact today that the British Government cannot hinder our progress to independence if we can hold together and act in a disciplined and united manner. It is only our own weaknesses and lack of unity and discipline that give it the chance to hold us down and frustrate us. We are strong enough today, potentially; how can we convert that potentiality into actuality?

Long years of struggle and training have hardened us and disciplined our minds and bodies. Instead of loose talk we speak the language of action, and even our mildest whispering has weight because it has the promise of action behind it. Success has come to us in some measure, and that very success has made people forget that training and discipline which laid the foundation for it. It is strange how short our memories are, how soon we forget.

A generation has gone by since the Congress took to this new path of disciplined and peaceful struggle. Many of our dearly loved captains and comrades are no more, and we, who still linger on, feel lonely as our old companions in the struggle drop out. New people come and fill the ranks and grow rightly impatient at the slowness of change. They are eagerly welcomed with their fresh enthusiasm and desire to achieve. They represent Today more than we do, and Tomorrow is theirs. But these newcomers have no memory of that training and discipline of the long years of trouble. Will they profit by the experience of the passing generation, or will they stumble along and themselves learn in that bitter school? The world is heavy with sorrow and tragedy stalks everywhere. Abyssinia, Spain, China, Palestine—can we forget them? Can we forget the mad folly of our communal troubles? There is no easy walk-over to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow again and again before we reach the mountain-tops of our desire.

Dangers and difficulties have not deterred us in the

past; they will not frighten us now. But we must be prepared for them like men who mean business and who do not waste their energy in vain talk and idle action. The way of preparation lies in our rooting out all impurity and indiscipline from our organization and making it the bright and shining instrument that will cleave its way to India's freedom.

*February, March, 1939.*

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#### STATEMENT ISSUED TO THE PRESS BY NEHRU (see p. 128)

I have refrained from issuing statements or saying much about the situation created by the Congress Presidential contest, as I wished to avoid doing anything which might further complicate an already complex situation. Ordinarily, in a static period, such a contest or its natural consequences would not have mattered much, as all democratic organizations have to pass through them from time to time. But the ever-deepening international crisis and the rapid trend of public affairs in India towards a deadlock force us to think in other terms. My own mind has been dominated by this thought, and I have therefore tried, in so far as lay in my power, to prevent anything happening which might come in the way of our offering a united and determined front. It was because of this that I was opposed to Subhas Babu's re-election, as I knew the consequences that would flow from it. It is difficult and perhaps not desirable to enter into the various reasons which led me to this conclusion. But I should like to make it clear that they had nothing to do with Right or Left. In the course of the election campaign Subhas Babu made certain statements about his colleagues in the Working Committee which astonished and pained me.<sup>1</sup> So far as I

<sup>1</sup> On January 25, 1939, Subhas Bose stated that it was "widely believed that there was a prospect of a compromise on the Federal scheme between the Right Wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year."

A later report, dated January 28, quotes him thus: "Though

knew, there was no basis for them. If there was any truth in them, then those who were guilty of the activities mentioned, or even those who passively supported them, were unworthy of guiding the destinies of the Congress. If the statements and allegations were not true, then the least that could be done was to withdraw them unconditionally. There was no middle course. It was highly improper for our Congress affairs at the very top to be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and lack of faith. I suggested to the Congress President that this was the first and most essential point to be considered, but no attempt has so far been made to deal with it.

I further suggested to Subhas Babu that, in view of the vague and unjustified use of the words Left and Right, it was desirable for him to define exactly in writing, to help consideration and discussion, what policy he advocated both in national and international affairs. I had found myself in disagreement with his views in some important matters, and I felt that clarification was necessary. Unfortunately, no such clarification has taken place, and his sudden and regrettable illness has prevented us from discussing these matters with him.

As there seems to be a great deal of misapprehension in the public mind and the Tripuri session is at hand, I feel compelled to issue this statement, especially as the Working Committee has not met and is not going to meet. This committee has for the time being ceased to be, and the President, as he probably wishes, has a free hand to frame and put forward his proposals before the Congress. In accordance with his desire, no meeting was held here even to transact routine business. In view of these de-

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the Congress resolution on Federation is one of uncompromising hostility the fact remains that some influential Congress leaders have been advocating conditional acceptance of the Federal scheme in private and in public. . . . It is generally believed that a prospective list of ministers for the Federal Cabinet has been drawn up. In the circumstances it is natural that the Left or Radical bloc in the Congress should feel so strongly on the question of the Federal scheme and desire to have an Anti-Federationist in the Presidential Chair."



velopments I fear I cannot be of help to him even in my individual capacity. We cannot consider resolutions in the air, we have to see the background and the surrounding circumstances, and I find all these factors to be most uninviting. There is a tendency also for local Congress disputes to be dealt with not in the usual routine way<sup>1</sup> but directly from the top, with the result that particular groups and parties are favoured, confusion is increased and Congress work suffers. For many years I have been associated with the Congress headquarters office as working secretary or as President and have come into intimate touch with its work. It pains me to see that in the very heart of our organization new methods are being introduced which can only lead to local conflicts spreading to higher planes.

In spite of my long association with the Congress I have never been closely associated with any particular group in it, though I have had the privilege of co-operating with all kinds of people. I have been an individual in this great organization, and that is always a difficult task. Often I have felt that I was a square peg in a round hole. During the years of my office I have frequently been on the verge of resigning because I felt that I could serve the Congress better if I did not have the responsibility of office. But I refrained from doing so, as I was firmly convinced that in the dynamic and critical times we live in we must present a united front and subordinate our individual opinions where these tended to impair that front. I have been and am a convinced socialist and a believer in democracy, and have at the same time accepted whole-heartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years. I am convinced that strength can only come to us from the masses, but that strength either for struggle or for the great work of building a new world must be a disciplined and orderly strength. It is not out

<sup>1</sup> The Congress Constitution provides the machinery and the procedure to deal with disputes and other difficulties that may arise in any level of its organizational structure. The election Tribunals are an example of this.

of chaos or the encouragement of chaotic forces that we can fashion the India of our dreams. It is true that sometimes even chaos has given birth to a dancing star, but its usual progeny are suffering and degradation and internecine conflict and reaction. Today we have the strength, if we know how to use it, to march in a disciplined and orderly way to freedom. We are no weaklings today, the victims of an ignoble fate. Why, then, should we act as such?

In the past I have often felt that I should not belong to the Working Committee. Under present circumstances this conviction is all the stronger, for I do not think I can accept the responsibilities of this high position in the background and the atmosphere of today, more especially after the presidential election. I agree with those who think that it is only fair that the President should be free to follow his policy and should choose his colleagues from among those who agree with this policy.

As this internal crisis has come upon us we should try to profit by it by clearing our minds and analysing the situation fully. We have had enough of vague phrases and hackneyed words. I do not think we need be anxious about the future if we are wise enough to learn from the present. If crisis comes we shall all be prepared to face it together as we have done in the past.

WARDHA.

*February 22, 1939.*

*The United Provinces Congress*

## I

THE resignation of the Provincial Congress Executive at Ayodhya received a considerable measure of publicity in the press. This was natural, and yet perhaps the significance of it was hardly realized by most people. It did not obviously represent a split in the Provincial Congress, nor did it take place because of ideological differences. There are various groups in the P.C.C., some with an ideological background, some unhappily based on personalities. But no party or group was involved in this resignation. The question at issue was an important one but not a vital one, and no question of principle was at stake. Ordinarily there would have been no resignation.

Why then was this resignation offered? Because the Council felt that in the interests of the Congress the time had come when our proceedings should be conducted with a full appreciation of reality and responsibility. The Congress has been for these many years an agitational organization and it has inevitably developed this background. The demand of a purely agitational organization is for things it wants, and sufficient attention is not always paid to the manner of getting them or to their fitting in with other demands.

Gandhiji, however, brought an element of reality to the Congress nineteen years ago, and we were progressively made to think in terms of action rather than of words and demands. When action was to follow we had to be careful of our words. A measure of responsibility was thus thrust upon us.

The Congress grew in power and its influence extended to millions. By a decision it could shake up the whole country, launch civil disobedience, or start a no-tax campaign. This was a terrible responsibility for those who

had to shoulder it. For fear of shouldering such a responsibility some organizations or people give up all thought of effective action and confine themselves to vague and high-sounding words. They become static and divorced from reality. The Congress could not possibly do that; it had to be dynamic if it was to fulfil its historic mission. It continued to function effectively on the plane of action, but it did so with a full sense of responsibility. It tried to co-ordinate its dynamic character with the responsibility which its strength and vast influence thrust upon it.

With the coming of the Congress Ministries new problems arose, some of them of a kind to which the Congress was not accustomed. There was danger of its playing second fiddle to the Ministries, of losing its revolutionary approach to national problems, and accommodating itself to the *status quo*. There was an equal danger, on the other side, of a continuous agitational interference with the Provincial Governments, resulting in a total inability of those Governments to keep pace with the demands made upon them. A growing discordance would have taken place and the Government could not have survived, even when there was no deliberate intention of ending it. The only proper course was for the Congress to retain its dynamic character and its revolutionary approach, and yet at the same time to function with full responsibility so as to avoid that discordance. The Congress Governments had on their part to bear in mind the real objectives of the Congress and to do everything in their power to work in line with the organization outside.

Right at the beginning, when the Congress Ministries were formed, the Working Committee took care to clarify this position. They laid stress on the great importance of work outside the Legislatures, and desired the full co-operation of the Congress Governments and parties in the Legislatures with the Provincial Congress Committees.<sup>1</sup> They appointed a Parliamentary Sub-Committee to co-ordinate our activities and supervise parliamentary work.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C2 for fuller information on the Congress Constitution.

We have had eighteen months of this now and the mere fact that we have functioned with a measure of success is evidence that we have been adapting ourselves to the new conditions. That adaptation has not been complete nor has the success been as heartening as some of us had hoped. But considering all the circumstances and the inherent difficulties of the problem, we have done fairly well and laid the foundations of greater success.

But while that full success still lingers, difficulties encompass us. They do not frighten us for we have accustomed ourselves to crisis and difficulty and we shall face them in the present and in the future, as we have done in the past, with a stout heart and with courage and responsibility. The fact that there are many newcomers within the Congress fold, some attracted by the lure of advancement, makes it all the more incumbent on us to hold fast to our anchor. We shall only do that if we remember our basic principles, and consider everything with a full sense of responsibility and a realization of the consequences of our words and deeds. We dare not speak or act irresponsibly. Those who decide on a course of action must shoulder the burden of carrying it out or else the power to decide and the power to give effect to that decision will be divorced from each other, and this will result in disintegration and chaos.

It was this fundamental problem that was before the Provincial Executive Council when it decided to offer its resignation. This problem will ever be with us and our future progress depends on our solving it satisfactorily.

Let us remember what the Congress is today, what privileges it has, what responsibilities accompany them. Those privileges will fade away if we are forgetful of our responsibilities. We have to view each problem in its larger setting, so that one false step in a particular direction might not upset the balance of our struggle. Ours is an organic movement, as all vital movements are, and our advance forward must be a planned advance, keeping all the factors in view.

It is in this light that we have to consider each one

of our problems—independence, Indian States, Kisans, workers, industry, minorities. It is from this view-point that we must build up our Congress organization.

## II

The Congress has within its fold many groups, widely differing in their view-points and ideologies. This is natural and inevitable if the Congress is to be the mirror of the nation. But the Congress would cease to be an organization and a movement if there was not a common purpose and a common discipline binding together these varying groups and millions of individuals. That common purpose has been from the early days political freedom. But while there is unanimity about the former, there is disagreement about the content of the latter, though the principle has been fully accepted. And because of this disagreement tension arises and different methods are pursued. Yet it is clear that we must not permit this tension to increase to the point of endangering the common purpose of the movement. As has been repeatedly stated, the basic problem of India today is the integration of the political and the social movements. Without that neither can go ahead and each will founder. Those who in the enthusiasm of the moment forget this injure their own as well as the wider cause.

People will differ, of course, and should differ in a vital movement. It is not difference of views that I have in mind at present, but the fact that every such view-point must be held and expressed with full responsibility and acceptance of the consequences of giving effect to it. It must be considered in relation to the totality of circumstances.

The Congress organization has grown to vast dimensions, and, because of this, greater responsibilities have been cast upon us. We can legitimately take pride in our achievement, but we dare not grow self-complacent. It should be our function, even more than that of our opponents, to criticize ourselves and to probe out our weak-

nesses and seek to remove them. It is with this purpose in view that the Working Committee has laid great stress on our purifying our organization.

Our Provincial Congress Committee has not waited for instructions from the Working Committee in this matter. We have, for a year or more, given earnest consideration to it and have already made many changes in our constitution in order to make our organization more efficient and to root out any elements of corruption from it. Last year we established a kind of Congress Civil Service consisting of persons who were pledged to keep away from election to any Congress Committee. They were to be our permanent staff of office secretaries, inspectors, organizers, and auditors, above party strife, and carrying on all routine activities with efficiency and impartiality. Every District and City Committee, and of course the Provincial Committee, was enjoined to keep them and we have, I believe, nearly forty members of this national service now. This in itself has resulted in greater efficiency and to some extent in keeping out party activities from the routine work of our various offices.

Other changes followed. The vital change of having a register of voters other than a register of four-anna members.<sup>1</sup> Only such of the latter as take the trouble to go personally to the Congress office to register themselves can vote. This procedure not only helps in eliminating bogus and fictitious members, but also increases the political consciousness of the people. Qualifications for members of all executives were also raised and, in particular, regular national work was made compulsory for them. We have

<sup>1</sup> Under Article III. of the Congress Constitution any person over the age of eighteen years who declares his or her belief in the object of the Indian National Congress, as set out in Article I., and pays 4 annas, becomes a primary member of the Congress and is placed on the register of members.

Under Art. VIII. of the Constitution a member is entitled to vote at any Congress election only if he has been continuously on the register for twelve months prior to the date of such election and if he produces a certificate of membership.

also constituted a provincial Election Tribunal,<sup>1</sup> thus separating, to a large extent, the judicial and executive functions within the organization. These are some of the major changes and we shall watch with interest how they work. It may be that further changes are necessary in order to tighten up our organization and make it a more efficient fighting instrument in the cause of Indian freedom.

The lead that the United Provinces gave was approved of by the Working Committee, and other provinces have been asked to follow it. This is gratifying for us, but it means also that we must make every effort to keep up to the mark. This can only be done with the willing co-operation of our members and workers. The past year's work, in spite of many difficulties and novel situations, was a record of successful achievement. The best of this is not the membership of fourteen and a half lakhs,<sup>2</sup> gratifying as that is, but the efficiency of our provincial and other offices and the discipline of our organization. Our provincial office has grown and the president and secretaries and others connected with it deserve commendation for their hard and unselfish labours. We must remember also that all this work of a vast organization is carried on almost entirely with the income derived from the four-anna membership. We depend on no contributions from the rich. This itself is a sign of our strength and popular basis.

<sup>1</sup> Under Article VIII. of the Congress, the Provincial Congress Committee elects yearly, unanimously, or at least by a three-quarters majority, a Provincial Election Tribunal which appoints district Tribunals as provided under the Article. The Provincial Tribunal receives appeals from district Tribunals in addition to dealing with matters within its own competence in the first instance. The District Tribunals have the power to receive and decide disputes relating to enrolment of members, election of delegates, office bearers, etc. The Working Committee has power to receive appeals from Provincial Tribunals, to supersede them and to appoint Tribunals where the Province have defaulted.

<sup>2</sup> A lakh is 100,000. The increase of Congress membership in the United Provinces to nearly 1½ millions out of an All-India total of 6 millions is an index of the power of the Congress and the efficiency of the organization in the province.



The U.P. Provincial Congress has two special features which are not found elsewhere. During the last nineteen years, so far as I can remember, no appeal has come from the U.P. to the A.I.C.C. on any election or other matter. This is remarkable as the A.I.C.C. office is flooded with appeals and complaints from other provinces. But we imposed this self-discipline on ourselves and decided to consider our Provincial decisions as final. By that we have stood all these years.

The second feature is still more interesting. We have deliberately sought to increase the prestige of our impersonal organization and not of individuals. For us our Provincial Committee or its Council have counted, not individual office-bearers of it, howsoever eminent. Of course, personality counts and individuals make a difference. But we have preferred laying stress on the democratic basis of the organization and on its collective wisdom. Thus our presidents have been honoured leaders, but their position has not been much more than that of a member of the Executive Council. They change from year to year, and last year we made a rule enforcing this annual change for every committee. Whoever is the president the policy continues, as it is guided by the Council.

In some other provinces the presidents of the Provincial Congress Committees have a much higher status and a more important position. They also continue in office year after year. This has some advantages, but I am sure that in the long run the U.P. convention is the sounder and builds up a stronger and more democratic organization.

Today the real foundation of the Congress in the U.P. is the Mandal Committee, including in its fold forty or so villages. We have many subordinate committees under the mandal, but effective and disciplined organization begins from the mandal. The rapid growth of these mandals in the province is a sign full of promise for us.

The year 1939 is upon us with all its horror and dismal prophecy of war and conflict. The problems that will confront us will grow more intricate and difficult, requiring all our courage and determination. We have to be vigilant

and ever ready, holding fast to each other and to our cause, not swept away by temporary success, not deterred by setbacks, and bearing ourselves with dignity in good fortune and ill fortune alike. To my innumerable colleagues in this province of ours, dear comrades in a noble enterprise, I send my greetings for the New Year and my earnest wishes that this year will be one of achievement for us.

ALLAHABA.

*January 6, 1939.*

*Askote*

THE first week of January of this year saw a remarkable pilgrimage. Five hundred peasants from Askote marched across the mountains and the valleys to lay their grievances before the Prime Minister of the United Provinces Government at Lucknow. There were no roads or swift means of transport and for a full week they tramped, following the bridle path to the distant plains below.

Where is this Askote? Who had heard of it before this band of five hundred determined men forced it on people's notice and put Askote on the map of India? Few, I imagine, outside the district of Almora knew of it. Askote is a taluqa in Almora district, a frontier region bordering on Nepal and not far from Tibet. It is a week's march from Almora town. One hundred and forty-two villages dot its four hundred square miles, most of which are forest land.

This taluqa is held under a peculiar tenure by the Rajwar, as the zamindar is called. Before the conquest of Kumaun by the Gurkhas the Rajwar seems to have considered himself a semi-independent chief and had freedom to do what he liked, subject to some kind of payment to the overlord. The Gurkhas reduced his status and made him a farmer of land revenue. Even then he had a great deal of freedom and could deal with his tenants as he liked so long as he paid the sum assessed by the Government. The coming of the British made no essential difference to him, and though a number of settlements were made, his privileged position continued and he was unlike any other landlord in Kumaun. The British officers were anxious to keep on good terms with this frontier baron, who occupied a position of some strategic importance. Sir Henry Ramsay, the Commissioner of Kumaun, wrote in 1873: "If political difficulties arise on the eastern frontier of Kumaun, the Rajwar's services will be as much required and as valuable as ever, and to maintain his impor-

tant position, it is most desirable that his former status be maintained."

So the Rajwar continued, in practice if not in strict law, as a feudal chief far removed from any control from above. The Government was obliging enough to make him a special magistrate and his brother the local police officer and patwari.<sup>1</sup> (Patwaris in Kumaun have special powers.) The Rajwar family was thus all-powerful, and it was impossible for any of the tenants to object or protest against any imposition. There was not even a telegraph office in Askote, and the post to Almora took many days. The peasantry were backward and had to put up with a large number of payments, other than rent, on the ground of custom.

Echoes of the non-co-operation movement reached Askote, and gradually the peasants began to wake up and agitate against many of the illegal dues. They were crushed by the Rajwar family repeatedly, and the agitation subsided for a while, but only to rise again. In 1938 the Congress Government sent two committees to inquire and lengthy reports were presented by these committees. The people waited patiently, hoping that some relief would come to them at last. They had heard of some of the recommendations made in these reports and did not know that the wheels of governments move terribly slowly. Instead of relief coming there was some fresh aggression on behalf of the Rajwar and then they lost patience.

They decided to march to Lucknow, and five hundred of them started on the long trail. A mild sensation was created; the whole district knew about it, and the peasantry followed the march with interest. Efforts were made to stop them by promises and assurances, but they continued till they reached the plains at Pilibhit. There in response to a personal appeal from the Prime Minister they stopped and sent a small deputation to interview him in Lucknow. They returned with the Prime Minister's word that he would set right their grievances. They are waiting for the fulfilment of that promise.

<sup>1</sup> Revenue official.

This Askōte march has its lessons for us if we care to learn them. The Congress organization in Almora was inactive and did little for the Askote people, Government was slow moving, and so these backward peasants, totally ignorant of politics and demonstrations, took the initiative into their own hands and decided to present their case personally to the big people at the top. By taking this step they succeeded more than they had done by years of patient petitioning. Their political education has begun and their progress is likely to be rapid.

ALMORA,

*January 25, 1939.*

## C. AFTER TRIPURI

### I

### *Provincial Governments—Wake Up!*

Our Provincial Governments are very busy. It is the busiest time of the year for them. Budgets are being discussed and criticized, and where long-established vested interests are touched, angry and sorrowful cries rend the air. Our Ministers work hard and late and wear themselves out in the process. Some may envy their high position, others may intrigue for preferment to ministership. But few who have come in close contact with the work of our Ministers would care to take their place and shoulder the heavy burdens and responsibility and drudgery that is their lot. They have worked faithfully and unceasingly for India and for the cause for which the Congress has laboured, and if the success that has come to them has not been as great as we hoped, it is foolish and uncharitable to cast the blame on them. Their achievement has indeed been considerable and worthy of pride.

And yet, and yet, the sands run out and this mad world rushes on, and problems multiply, and if we do not keep pace with them we perish. The world of today is not for the complacent or the slow of foot or those who are the slaves of events.

It is this realization that has increasingly gripped India, and behind the unseemly controversy about the Congress Presidential election or Tripuri,<sup>1</sup> behind the personal conflicts and the growth of adventurism, there lies this vital urge of our people, their desire to shake themselves out of the rut of complacency and to play their part in the dynamic world of today. The resolution on the "National Demand," unhappily somewhat overshadowed by con-

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the Tripuri Congress, see Appendix C 1.

troversy on personal issues, was *the* resolution of the Congress, and it embodied this vital urge. Provincial autonomy, it said, is rapidly exhausting its possibilities and the time has come, both nationally and internationally, when the great step-forward must be taken. If our Ministers and Provincial Governments, as well as the Congress organization, realize this change in objective conditions and in the temper of our people, and put themselves in tune with it, then it is well with them. Otherwise they will lose grip and grow increasingly ineffective and wrapped up in their petty problems and difficulties. It is not by pursuing a policy of drift that major problems are solved in a revolutionary age. We cannot merely carry on, or else we shall all be carried away to none knows where.

The communal problem faces us threateningly, and yet it grows ever clearer that in its essence it is a political problem and not just a communal one. Bloody riots have occurred in the United Provinces, and open and unabashed provocation to murder and violence has had free field. Strange stories come of incompetence and mischief-making and toleration of this new phase of violence. A few riots need not frighten us, distressing as they are. Let us not forget that the vast majority of our population lives peacefully and is unaffected by the mischief of a few. But even so we must discover the secret springs behind these disturbances and take steps to put an end to this growing violence and terrorism. All men and women of goodwill, to whatever party or group they might belong, must desire this. Those who are in official charge of the functions of government in local areas must realize their responsibilities and appreciate that their failure to curb this violence is a black stain on their record and reputation. It is possible that the best of administrators might be overwhelmed temporarily by the course of events. It is also possible, and the presumption is not unjustified, that incompetence or mischief often lies behind these disturbances. We can tolerate neither incompetence nor mischief-making, nor can we drift along while these flourish.

Our problems fill our minds. Yet the problem of prob-

lems today, overshadowing all else, is the growth and triumph of gangsterism in international affairs. The lights go out in Europe and elsewhere, the shadows increase, and in the darkness freedom is butchered and brutal violence reigns. Tragedy envelops us, heart-breaking tragedy, as we see the death of nation after nation, the vast suffering and misery of millions of people crushed by barbarian feet. "Brotherhood," "sisterhood" are bastard creeds, says Signor Mussolini; only the sword counts with him, the sword that kills freedom and democracy and puts an end to the culture and civilization of ages. Spain of the Republic and of freedom is no more, only the bright and imperishable memory of her glorious struggle remains. Czecho-Slovakia used to be on the map of Europe; it is no more, and Herr Hitler's minions trample on her brave children, betrayed so shamefully by England and France. From day to day we await in suspense what this dictator or that says; anxiously we wonder what the next aggression will be.

How does all this affect India? Dare we ignore these tremendous happenings in Europe? India's freedom will not be worth many days' purchase if Fascism and Nazism dominate the world. Our own existence is bound up with the fate of freedom and democracy in the world. Only a union of freedom-loving peoples and their mutual co-operation can avert the common peril. For that union India must stand.

But let us not forget recent history. It is not Hitler or Mussolini who has created the present crisis in Europe. Ultimately it is the policy of the British Government, supported by the French Government. There is a great deal of talk of the democracies defending freedom against the onslaughts of Fascism. But it is these very so-called democracies of Western Europe that have helped and encouraged Fascism and Nazism and done to death the Spanish Republic and Czecho-Slovakia.

Let us not talk, therefore, of Mr. Chamberlain's Government or Messieurs Daladier and Bonnet's Government as democracies, and so long as these governments or their



like continue, no one will consider them the champions of democracy. They have too much blood of the free on their hands, too many betrayals to their credit, for them to pose as democrats or lovers of freedom. Even if they are forced to fight Fascism, no one will trust their good faith or their motives, and they will yet again betray the cause which they trumpet so loudly. Behind the gallant speeches even today, what intrigues are going on, what base manœuvres, what contemplated betrayals? Even terrible danger on the doorstep and in the sky overhead does not shake Mr. Chamberlain's faith in his Munich policy.

Certainly India will not fall in line with Mr. Neville Chamberlain's policy in peace or in war. She will oppose it and resist it, for it is the embodiment of the imperialism and Fascism which she detests. But England and France have still the instinct of democracy, although this may be hidden by the Chamberlains, Halifaxes, and Simons; their peoples still care for freedom. If this instinct finds proper expression and really stands up for the defence of democracy, then India can certainly look favourably on it and lend her hand in support.

But India cannot support democracy elsewhere without democracy for her own people. An India dominated by imperialism can only think in terms of resisting that imperialism. Only freedom and complete self-determination for us can convince us of the *bona fides* of the British Government; only these can create the conditions for mutual co-operation in the face of common peril.

We have been recently told on behalf of the British Government that the Government of India Act holds and will continue. If that is the British answer to us, then our path is clear; it is one of resistance to British Imperialism whatever the consequences might be. It is whispered also that an attempt is being made to restrict the powers of the Provincial Governments in the event of war,<sup>1</sup> by giving

<sup>1</sup> This has been done since. The British Government amended the Government of India Act, passed Orders in Council several times in 1939, 1940, and 1941, to restrict the powers of Provincial

executive authority in the Provinces to the Central Government. If this attempt is made, it will be fought to the uttermost.

It has not been our policy or habit to bargain or blackmail in times of crisis. We function differently, and we shall continue this policy whether war comes or not. But we can only function in terms of the dignity and freedom of the Indian people, and no other conditions are acceptable to us. The issues before us are not academic; they are of the Here and Now, vital for the interests of India, of England, and the world. We offer our co-operation for freedom and democracy well realizing the imminent peril of today. But we offer the co-operation of a free people and not of a slave nation. The conspiracy against freedom, in the name of "appeasement" or a bogus peace, has gone far enough, and it is time it was halted, if the world is not to perish in widespread catastrophe.

The Provincial Governments, functioning in the sphere of the Province, cannot ignore the wider issues. They have to play their part in this vital drama which is changing the face of things. They may be asked to act in a hundred ways which, though apparently innocuous, yet affect these wider issues. They dare not forget them, and every step they might take, big or small, must be guided by these broader considerations and by the basic policy of the Congress. They have, of course, to resist any encroachment on their present powers. But they have to do much more than merely to act on the defensive. They have to be vigilant guardians of our cause and to prepare themselves for all eventualities. That is a heavy responsibility and they must prove worthy of it. Wake up, Provincial Governments!

LUCKNOW,

*March 28, 1939.*

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administrations and increase that of the Governor-General and the Central Government, and have suspended representative government in the majority of the Provinces.

## 2

### *Destiny*

THE Ides of March brought disaster to Europe and to democracy, and Czecho-Slovakia vanished from the map of the world. Yet war did not come. Stunned and full of fear, the countries of Europe waited for yet another spring of the beast of prey. It came soon enough, and Memel was the victim. Yet war did not come. We were told that the spring campaigns and offensives were over and peace would reign in Europe till the far-off autumn at least. But autumn was still far off when Easter came with its message of good-will, and Good Friday saw the rape of Albania. Yet war did not come.

War has not come yet, but who can tell when it will descend on us? Who dare say that peace is assured till the autumn or even till the hot summer envelops us? There is marching and stamping of millions of armed men in Europe, and night and day men and women turn out engines of destruction and dig trenches and erect barricades, and the sky is covered with the messengers of death.. Who dare say that the thin thread that holds back these forces will not snap and unleash destruction and doom on hapless mankind? Peace, so-called peace, holds today; what of tomorrow or the day after?

Like some pre-ordained tragedy, inevitable and inescapable, war pursues us and will seize us by the throat. We cannot escape our destiny.

Meanwhile we discuss the problems of Left and Right and speculate what the next Working Committee is likely to be. Meanwhile, Durbar Virawala<sup>1</sup> is at his old tricks

<sup>1</sup> Since the end of 1938 negotiations had been proceeding between the ruler of the Indian State of Rajkot, Kathiawar (the Thakore Saheb) and the *Praja Mandal*, a popular organization agitating for constitutional reforms in the State. The *Praja Mandal* was assisted by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Congress leader. In January, 1939, in supporting the *Praja Mandal*'s call to

again, and the Rulers of States or their Ministers endeavour to crush their awakened people. And our Provincial Governments bow down before a hundred problems, and communal conflicts shame our people, and Shias and Sunnis glare at each other. Yet a day will come when suddenly out of the blue a score of ordinances will descend upon us and put an end to our musing and to our trumpery arguments and conflicts. If those ordinances find us unready, then it will be ill for us and ill for our land.

We have had enough of this pettiness, and destiny calls to us, as of old, to shoulder the burden of a great nation's fate. Let us pull ourselves together and be worthy of this destiny. Enough of party strife or communal trouble. Enough of everything that comes in the way of effective action to face the perils that surround us. The Congress must set its house in order and put an end to the deadlock that has so long disabled us. It must plan ahead and guide the nation in the hour of crisis. It must stretch out its hand in fellowship to all who care for India's freedom, for, whatever label may attach to us, we are all pilgrims marching together to the same goal. Prestige or past conflict must not be allowed to come in the way of present or future co-operation. To our countrymen in communal organizations, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, we would make appeal to set aside all bitterness and mutual ill-will and to declare a truce to communal wrangling, forerunner of an enduring peace. And to Shias and Sunnis we would earnestly suggest that the time has come when they should meet together and settle themselves the problem that has caused so much bitterness and suffering to both.

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civil disobedience, Sardar Patel accused the ruler of breaking promises made to the Praja Mandal, and stated that he had been influenced against the Praja Mandal by the Prime Minister, Durbar Virawala. He added, "Today he (Thakore Saheb) is ruler in name only." The breakdown of the negotiations led to Mahatma Gandhi's fast (March 3-7, 1939) and the submission of the dispute to arbitration by the Chief Justice of India. (See note 1, p. 159.)

We have to be ready for the crisis. But the first shock of it will have to be borne by the Provincial Governments, and it is for them to keep wide awake and vigilant. The Congress policy, as recorded in numerous resolutions, stands clear. This has to be followed, and India is not going to be ordered about by British Imperialism or to carry out the mandates imposed from above upon her. The war emergency envisaged by the British Government stares us in the face and the Parliament in London is considering the new law to restrict and circumscribe still further the power of our Provincial Governments and Provincial Assemblies. The Council of the United Provinces Congress has given the mandate in regard to this to our Provincial Government. It is for that Government and for the Assembly to act up to it and to get ready and prepare for the challenge. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

*April 16, 1939.*

### 3

## *The Challenge*

PROBLEMS and difficulties surround us. The Congress organization is not functioning as it should, and different forces pull it in varying directions. The Congress President has not fully recovered yet from his long illness. Argument continues as to what took place at Tripuri. Our friends the Liberals are agitated over the Employments Tax; the Muslim League continues to tell us of the real and imagined failings of the Congress. In Lucknow the Shia-Sunni<sup>1</sup> tangle has unfortunately not been resolved yet to the satisfaction of all concerned. In the States there is a deep rumbling, precursor of mighty movements, which are checked for a while under Mahatma Gandhi's advice. In the West armies march and politicians intrigue, and the world waits breathlessly for the issue of war or peace.

If war comes all our petty conflicts and troubles will vanish under the strain of overwhelming crisis. India will be tested then to the uttermost, and it is time we got ready for that test.

Meanwhile a challenge has been thrown out to us, a challenge which none of us can ignore. That challenge is the attempt to amend the Government of India Act for war emergencies, in order to emasculate still further our Provincial Governments. The whole past history of the Congress, the very resolution under which Congressmen accepted office, stand out as a reply to this challenge. It was not necessary for a fresh direction to be given. Yet it was well that the Council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee declared explicitly that this amendment or any intrusion of the Central Government on the present

<sup>1</sup> Shias and Sunnis are the two main sects of Moslems. Shias are the minority and form about 20 per cent. of all Moslems in India.

powers of the Provincial Governments will not be tolerated. It was well that they drew attention to this challenge and, in dignified language, made it clear that any such intrusion would be considered a *casus belli*.

This is a major issue for us and for India and this fact must be realized by all concerned, for the consequences that will follow any attempt to coerce a Provincial Government will inevitably be serious.

We understand that the Bill to amend the Government of India Act is likely to be rushed through the British Parliament by the end of this month.<sup>1</sup> Let those who do so realize where they are going to. There are rocks ahead.

April 18, 1939.

<sup>1</sup> The Government of India Bill here referred to passed the House of Lords in the form drafted by the Government. It was not immediately proceeded with in the House of Commons on account of the pressure of Parliamentary business. Subsequently the Government rushed a Bill, containing the amendments foreseen in this article, through the House of Commons in eleven minutes. Further amendments have since been made with the object of strengthening the Viceroy's power.

## *The Gathering Clouds<sup>1</sup>*

WITHIN a few days the leaders of the Congress will gather in Calcutta and try to unravel the knot that has tied up many Congress activities during the past three months. The immediate prospect is not as hopeful as we would like it to be, and yet we refuse to be pessimistic. We have endeavoured during these past weeks since Tripuri to keep the *Herald* outside the controversy that has been raging in the newspaper press in some parts of India on the issues that confront the Congress organization. We are not averse to controversy, and democratic practice demands a full consideration of all aspects of a problem before a decision is arrived at. We would have willingly expressed our own opinions if the controversy had been about matters of principle or vital policy. But, unfortunately, debate and argument have centred round personal matters, and we are strongly of opinion that this approach is undesirable and clouds the issues. Even if this was permissible to some extent during normal periods, this surely is no time for us to get entangled in petty matters and to make our national policy the slave of our likes and dislikes.

We are strongly of opinion that it is imperative for us to hold together during these times of crisis, as we have done so often before when danger threatened. The Tripuri Congress may have produced varying reactions among different people. But let us remember it is the Congress, and its decisions that govern our policy and are binding on us. That must be the foundation of our work and our unity. To challenge those decisions is to challenge the Congress itself and thus to attack the very basis of our national movement.

But while we argue about our domestic differences, vital

<sup>1</sup> Appeared in *National Herald* as a leading article.



as they might be, clouds gather on the horizon, and through the gaps in them dangerous vistas open out. War, war of many nations and many peoples, still hangs in the balance and we await the development of events with the most anxious interest. But waiting is not enough if our national policy in regard to war, so often proclaimed and repeated, has any meaning.

We have drawn attention to the challenge of the Government of India Act Amendment Bill, recently introduced in the British House of Lords. Probably this will have a swift passage through both Houses in England and will become law. What does this mean? It is not only a challenge to the very conception of Provincial autonomy, it is also the first and a far-reaching step towards committing India to war. It is an attempt to mobilize Indian resources for war purposes without India's consent. It is a complete challenge to the war resistance resolutions of the Congress.

Let us admit that in the event of war there must be a central authority in India in control of the war situation. But that central authority can only be ourselves, or else it displaces what little authority we have and makes of Provincial Autonomy a mockery and a sham. A foreign central authority in full control of all that pertains to war means the establishment in India of a foreign war dictatorship. If we were unwise enough to submit to this, it would mean the paralysis and end of such restricted freedom as we possess.

This is the situation we have to face. By the passing of the India Act Amending Bill the whole basis and the surrounding circumstances under which the Congress decided, after much doubt and argument, to accept office are altered, and a new relationship is created. Are we prepared to accept this? The whole past history of the Congress supplies the answer to this.

Many of us have laid stress on the struggle against Federation. If Federation is ever imposed upon us there is bound to be a major struggle. But for our part we do not think that there is any likelihood of any such imposi-

tion. In any event, Federation is a remote issue; the issue today is the India Act Amending Bill and its consequences.

At this critical moment when all our united strength is required to meet the new peril, it grieves us to find national energy being frittered away in mutual conflict. It saddens us especially to read the poignant statement which has just been issued by Mahatma Gandhi about Rajkot.<sup>1</sup> That is not the way Gandhiji has functioned when danger threatens India; that is not the way, we feel sure, he will function. India needs him, India relies upon him, India calls to him. He must answer the call.

*April 25, 1939.*

<sup>1</sup> On April 24, 1939, Mahatma Gandhi issued a statement on the situation in Rajkot, following a further breakdown in negotiations between himself and Durbar Virawala on the composition of the Reforms Committee to propose reforms that would be acceptable to the Thakore Saheb and to the Praja Mandal. In his statement he said: "I never knew what it was to lose hope, but it seems to have been cremated at Rajkot. . . . The Award (*i.e.*, the Award of the Chief Justice, Sir Maurice Gwyer, given on 27/3/39) was acclaimed throughout India as a complete victory for the Sardar (*i.e.*, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel). But it has been effectively used against me for accusing me of a breach of promise to Muslims and Bhayats." The statement then gave details of negotiations with the British Resident and Durbar Virawala. After saying that he had called his colleagues together and explained that they must concentrate on changing the heart of Durbar Virawala, rather than on getting rid of him, Gandhi ended the statement with these words: "And so I have left empty-handed, with body shattered. . . . I have asked workers to confer with Durbar Virawala, to forget me and Sardar Patel, and, if they get enough to satisfy their least wants, they may accept the offer without reference to either of us. I have told Durbar Virawala: 'I am defeated. May you win. Placate the people by giving as much as possible, and wire me so as to revive the hope which I seem to have lost for the moment.'"

## 5

### *The A.I.C.C. and After*

#### I

FRIENDS and colleagues ask me many questions about the recent developments in the Congress, about the A.I.C.C. meeting, the formation of the "Forward Bloc,"<sup>1</sup> the happenings in Rajkot. In courtesy to them I discuss these matters, and sometimes to old friends and comrades I give a glimpse of my troubled mind. But their questions are seldom answered as they should be, and I am unable to unravel the tangle that is presented to me. I fear I give little satisfaction to them, and yet that is not surprising for I give even less satisfaction to myself. It is not out of this stuff that leadership comes, and the sooner my colleagues realize this the better for them and me. The mind functions efficiently enough, the intellect is trained to carry on through habit, but the springs that give life and vitality to that functioning seem to dry up. And so I hesitate to write on these subjects, and the idea of public speaking is increasingly distasteful to me.

Perhaps a slight lowering of the usual standard of health has reduced vitality, perhaps the heat of the season is partly responsible. But the trouble lies deeper in the inner recesses of the mind and the spirit, or even in the subconscious which is said ultimately to mould us.

The tragedy of Spain and much that has happened in the West has been a personal sorrow to me, leaving a deep and lasting impress. But Spain is far, and the problems of India fill my mind and distress me. It is not external difficulty that troubles, but the whole background of India with its conflicts and disruptive forces, its pettiness and mutual suspicion. There is no faith in us today of each other and every foolish statement and wild charge is

<sup>1</sup> For fuller information on the developments after Tripuri Congress see Appendix C 1.

believed. Vulgarity, that most distressful symptom, creeps into our public life in the Congress and even more outside it. Policies and programmes and high principles have their importance; they are vital and urgent. But behind them all lies the human material without which these principles and policies can have little meaning.

Tripuri was a painful experience in many ways and many of us returned from it heavy at heart. The subsequent press controversy and the fierce personal attacks that accompanied it filled me with sorrow. I felt helpless to check these developments, being out of tune with the participants on either side. At the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta I had hoped that we would end this wrangling and get down to straight work. I laboured for this to the best of my ability, but without success.

In Calcutta I did not agree with all the suggestions that Subhas Babu had put forward, but I was convinced that he was earnestly striving for a united functioning of the Congress, accepting the Tripuri decisions. I saw no reason why there should be any difficulty in bringing this about, but opposition, which seemed to me wholly unjustified, came and led to his resignation. Perhaps that resignation was inevitable under the circumstances, and yet I regretted it deeply, for it led to a deepening of the fissures that separated individuals and groups in the Congress. I regretted even more the absence of a spirit of accommodation during the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta.

Under these circumstances I could not join the new Working Committee. I had long been out of tune with the old Committee, but I had continued membership of it as I believed that the larger interest required it. With the new developments in Calcutta my place was outside, though not in any spirit of opposition or non-co-operation. Such co-operation as I could give was always at Rajendra Babu's disposal, and I appreciated greatly the courage with which he had agreed to shoulder a heavy burden and to face a disagreeable task.

But it is idle to ignore the differences that exist and tend to grow. Those differences are partly ideological, and

even more, temperamental, with a strong background of mutual suspicion. The Congress Presidential election in January last was not a vote of no-confidence against any person or individual policy, for no such issue had been framed or put before the voters. But it was a clear indication of dissatisfaction at things as they were and a desire to mend them. It had a lesson for all of us. That lesson has unfortunately not been learnt.

This refusal to learn and understand, this inability to adapt oneself to a growing situation, leads to resentment in the minds of many. There is a sense of frustration and suppression, which is the parent of suspicion and conflict. I have myself had this feeling of frustration, and I can well understand others, less favourably situated, reacting in like manner and to a greater degree. I can appreciate the desire to end or lessen this sense of frustration by an effort to bring together those who, broadly speaking, think alike and are desirous of functioning together and thus get rid of the feeling of individual helplessness which tends to overwhelm them.

But we may not, simply because we are driven by a sense of resentment, take a step which weakens us and leads to worse consequences. The world is in a sad mess today, tragic to those who are sensitive, heart-breaking to those who feel. We assure ourselves that we are living during an age of transition and that the sorrows of today are but the birth-pangs of the new order. It may be so, or perhaps our wishes are fathers to our thoughts. Meanwhile, we go through this agony, almost unendurable at times, and there is little hope of comfort in the future that we can see. Everywhere there is a cracking up, a dissolution of things as they are, but the building up of a new structure is not so evident. Ruling classes and groups, who have dominated affairs for so long, exhibit their utter incompetence and grow increasingly ineffective and incapable of dealing with the problems of today. And yet no other group or class appears strong enough or competent enough to take the reins of affairs in its hands. History has few examples of sheer ineptitude and failure

such as Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the British Government have exhibited; but Mr. Chamberlain and his Government continue for lack of others to take their place.

The world situation affects us, but even more so internal conditions point the same way. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that fascist elements, with apparently anti-imperialist slogans, may gain strength and power in our country and even in our national organization. There is sometimes a cry that the Congress High Command is adopting fascist methods. The High Command, as it is called, may have erred often enough, and it has certainly acted sometimes in an authoritarian way. But to suggest that it tends towards fascist methods is to exhibit ignorance. There is a good deal of fascism in the country to-day and a little of it even inside the Congress. It flourishes chiefly under communal colours and in some so-called non-political organizations. But the old leadership of the Congress, whatever its other failings, is far removed from it. Curiously enough, among the loudest of its critics are the fascist elements in the Congress.

## II

Subhas Babu's step in forming a "Forward Bloc" is an understandable corollary to what has happened, yet it is not necessarily a desirable one, for there are obvious dangers involved in it. It is, so far as is known at present, a negative grouping, an anti-bloc, whose sole binding cement is dislike of, or opposition to, the individuals or groups that control the Congress today. There is no positive policy based on definite principles, except a desire to ginger them up generally. There is no restriction which might keep out elements which, politically or otherwise, are undesirable. The doors of the "bloc" are wide open, and it is evident enough that a very miscellaneous company are likely to find shelter in it. We have had and still have plenty of trouble in Congress itself with the adventurist and opportunist elements that have crept in.

Long tradition and the inherent strength of the organization keep them in check to some extent, and we are now thinking of devising rules to control them still further.

But in a new organization or grouping without this tradition and checks and without any clear principles and ideology, such adventurist and opportunist elements will find full play, and might even, under cover of fine phrases, play a dominating rôle in it. It is quite possible that fascist and communal elements might also enter its folds and seek to exploit it to further their animus against the Congress and its anti-Fascist policy. How will Subhas Babu deal with this situation when it arises? We must remember that fascism grew in Europe under cover of radical slogans and popular phrases.

It will be easy for fascism to function under cover of our nationalism, and yet to give a wrong and dangerous bent to it. Already we are told that nationalism is in essence racialism, and therefore we must lay stress on the idea of our race and a hostility to other races. That has not been the nationalism under which we have grown up. Take another aspect of the question. Our war resistance policy is of vital importance to us. It has been adopted because of our love of freedom and democracy and our insistence on Indian independence. Now that very policy might be given a twist and made to fit in with Fascist desires. The Fascist Powers would very much like India to be a thorn in the side of England when war comes, so that they might profit by the situation we create. There is nothing that we would dislike so much as to play into the hands of the Fascist Powers, just as we dislike being exploited by imperialist Britain. Our anti-war policy must therefore be based on freedom and democracy and opposition to Fascism and imperialism. And yet with a little twist it might well be turned into a pro-Fascist policy.

These are some of the dangers of the "Forward Bloc." It is a little difficult to consider it positively as no clear indication of its policy is available. The only attempt to clothe the "Bloc" with a garment of a definite policy, so far as I know, has been made by Shri M. N. Roy in a

series of able speeches and articles. Do his views represent the policy of the "Bloc," or do they, at any rate, influence this policy considerably? These views, whether one agrees with them or not, represent a certain definite outlook and programme which is clearly at variance with anything we have done so far and which means a complete break with the past. I do not agree with this general outlook and approach, and I think that it is utterly out of touch with reality in India today. It is of course at variance with the Tripuri resolution which calls for no break of general policy. It does not fit in with what Subhas Babu has said about his own approach to present-day problems.

It is not my purpose to discuss the merits of Shri M. N. Roy's proposals here. The point is that they constitute a complete challenge to much that the Congress has stood for these many years, and, if accepted, must mean a break-up of the Congress as we know it. That may or may not be desirable, but at any rate let us know what the implications are. I want many changes in the Congress, but I think that they should grow organically from our past work and should not involve too much of a break. We must recognize and appreciate the great value of what has already been done and build on those foundations. Any attempt to act otherwise will certainly lead to complete disruption of our movement for freedom and the probable ascendancy of reactionary elements. Conditions in India are plain enough for us to learn from them. The recent history of Europe has a lesson for us which we cannot ignore.

There is one other aspect of the matter. The attempt to form a "Forward Bloc" or any such grouping inevitably results in the consolidation of other groups opposed to it. That, of course, is no reason why a group should not be formed, but it is a reason for it to be formed only at the proper time and in the proper way. Otherwise the immediate result is to strengthen the opposing groups, and to bring about a bitter conflict within the organization for control of various committees. Such conflicts have to be faced in a democratic organization, but it would be un-



fortunate if we became wrapped up in them on the eve of internal and external crises.

These are some of my difficulties in regard to the "Forward Bloc." But whichever way I look I find difficulty. The recent developments in Rajkot have an obvious importance, and they are certain to have far-reaching repercussions not only in the States but in all India. How far do they represent a change in Gandhiji's approach to political problems, how far will they affect the policy of the Congress which he dominates? Gandhiji may be right in what he has done in Rajkot; without more and detailed knowledge I am not entitled to express an opinion. But the various processes he has gone through during the past few months in connection with Rajkot are exceedingly difficult to understand or appreciate, and I do not see how a political movement can be guided in this way. When I had the honour of being elected president of the All-India States Peoples' Conference, I knew well that I could not work any wonders or do anything out of the ordinary. The whole question of the States is a vast and complicated one, varying in form and substance in different areas and yet having an underlying unity. I hoped, however, to be able to do something to co-ordinate these various movements and activities and to give them a common background. But I realized soon that any activity of mine might not be in tune with what Gandhiji was doing in regard to the States. I had no desire to say or do anything which might come into conflict with him, as this would produce confusion in the States. And so I remained quiet and more or less inactive. I felt disabled.

That sense of helplessness increases after the Rajkot events. I cannot function where I do not understand, and I do not understand at all the logic of what has taken place. This applies to the wider plane of All-India politics also.

I have had a considerable measure of belief in Gandhiji's vision and instinctive reaction to events. I have welcomed the moral tone he has given to our public life. His vital and prodigious contribution to our struggle for freedom is

an essential part of India's history. I think that he has yet to play a great part in our struggle and in fashioning our future. I hope that it will be India's good fortune to have him for many years.

But more and more the choice before many of us becomes difficult, and this is no question of Right or Left or even of political decisions. The choice is of unthinking acceptance of decisions which sometimes contradict each other and have no logical sequence, or opposition, or inaction. Not one of these three courses is easily commendable. To accept unthinkingly what one cannot appreciate or willingly agree to produces ultimately mental flabbiness and paralysis. No great movement can be carried on on this basis; certainly not a democratic movement. Opposition is difficult when it weakens us and helps the adversary. Inaction produces frustration and all manner of complexes, and is hardly conceivable when from every side comes the call for action.

That is the problem before many of us.

*May 24, 1939.*

## 6

### *Enough of It!*

I OWE an apology and an explanation for leaving India when so many urgent tasks demand attention. I do not usually play truant. For a long time I have felt strongly that closer contacts should be developed between India and China, and it was a joy for me when the Congress Medical Unit went to China. Still I felt that I might be of service in developing these contacts, and I toyed with the idea of going there. There were many who urged me to do so. Yet I hesitated. There was the international situation which might lead to war at any moment; there was the internal situation which was progressively deteriorating. I gave up all thought of leaving the country. But the idea stuck at the back of my mind and I could not get rid of it. I argued with myself that these crises will continue; there is no end to them in our present-day world. I might as well take advantage of a seeming lull. The journey was a short one by air and my absence need not be for long. I was not foolish enough to imagine that I could solve our many riddles by remaining here.

I mentioned my vague thoughts to some friends and immediately entanglement grew. Letters and cables and invitations poured in upon me from China, and I struggled in vain. I surrendered, possibly because I wanted to surrender and felt that I could be of more service to the cause of India by visiting China. After I had decided to go, other developments took place which then in some ways made me regret my decision. But it was not easy to withdraw at that stage.

Yet I am not sorry that I am going. I must confess that recent happenings<sup>1</sup> in India have disturbed me greatly. I am not for the moment referring to our internal conflicts within the Congress, important and far-reaching as they

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C 1.

are, but to something that has a deeper significance. I have felt that many of us have not fully appreciated them in their absorption with matters of lesser moment. To the small extent I could, I tried to prevent the rift in the Congress from widening because of the urgency of our facing other problems together. This endeavour of mine pleased nobody, or hardly anybody, and displeased many. Perhaps I was wrong.

It is perfectly true that I have felt puzzled and perplexed. This perplexity is not due to any doubt in my own mind as to what should be done, but rather to the difficulty of inducing any considerable numbers of others to act in a particular way. When organized groups and parties within the Congress function aggressively against each other, I feel singularly out of place, as I have not been used to such functioning. It invariably happens under these circumstances that each group tries to overreach the other, and the immediate and all-important objective seems to be to triumph over the other group. The larger good is often forgotten. Politics, seldom pleasant, become singularly unpleasant then.

I fear I am an ineffective politician at any time, and I have no taste whatever for the variety of politics that has lately developed. That is my weakness. When I cannot act effectively, I try at any rate to preserve a certain integrity of mind, and I wait for the time when I can act more effectively. It is a cheerless task.

Yet none of us dare be onlookers when vital tasks demand attention. I have no intention of being an onlooker.

Before I go I should like to draw the particular attention of my comrades in the United Provinces to the situation which is growing here, as well as in other Provinces. Because of our policy and deliberately not wishing to interfere, we have allowed this to grow. But it is time we called a halt to it.

This situation, at present in its very early stages, is full of undesirable possibilities. Various groups are deliberately trying to foment public disorder by violence and

methods of terrorism. It is easy for a handful of persons to do so when large numbers of others passively permit them. And so the handful grows in temerity and repeats its performance, and another handful takes its cue from it. The great majority of people suffer from this and cannot carry on their ordinary vocations or activities.

It is perhaps a little unfair to single out organizations for criticism, for every organization has good men and bad. But there is no unfairness in saying that communal organizations are chiefly responsible for this state of affairs. This is common knowledge and, indeed, they take pride in it.

It is obvious that if this kind of thing is allowed to continue it may lead to complete public insecurity and to armed or unarmed bands terrorizing the neighbourhood. No civilized people can tolerate this. This is not a matter merely for the Congress or the Government. Every man or woman of good-will and good sense must be interested in putting this public hooliganism down. No public or decent private life is possible if bands of roughs and hooligans dominate the scene.

It was time that it was made perfectly clear that this can be tolerated no longer. A Government may give a long rope but no Government can put up with hooliganism, or else it is not worthy of that name. Riots are detestable and have to be prevented, but even occasional riots, bad as they are, are to be preferred to continuing acts of public terrorism and hooliganism.

But for the present I am addressing Congressmen in this Province. I have little doubt that the Congress organization, if it functions properly, can remedy much that happens. Our methods must not and cannot be violent in the slightest. It is not through our violence that we are going to check the violence of others. We function peacefully but none the less effectively. We must tighten up our organization, and, more particularly, we must pay attention to our volunteers. Every Congress Committee must have its trained volunteer corps. Our volunteers are not meant for show or to impress the ignorant with

their bright new uniforms. Nor are they meant to interfere in any person's legitimate activity. They are the soldiers of the nation pledged to peaceful methods and service. They should have simple uniforms, of course, to distinguish them and give them a corporate sense. They must be disciplined and trained.

I call upon every Congress Committee—District, City, Town, Mandal, and Halqa—in the Province to devote itself with all earnestness to the formation of volunteer corps. The Provincial Office will give all the help it can. But work must be started without waiting for further directions. On my return from China six weeks later I hope to visit some parts of the U.P. and inspect these volunteers.

We have had enough of weak pandering to evil tendencies. Enough of it, and more than enough. A halt must be called. Let us pull ourselves together and set about this business in a businesslike way.

*August 18, 1939.*



PART THREE

*AWAY FROM POLITICS*

A. SCIENCE

B. TRAVEL

C. CULTURE





## A. SCIENCE

### I

### *Science and Planning*

#### ADDRESS TO THE INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS

MOST of us, unhappily, are too much engrossed in the business of politics to pay much attention to the finer and more important aspects of life. That is natural, perhaps, in a nation which struggles for national freedom and to rid itself of the bonds that prevent normal growth. Like a person in the grip of a disease, it can think only of how to gain health again, and this obsession is a barrier to the growth of culture and science. We are entangled in our innumerable problems; we are oppressed by the appalling poverty of our people. But if we had a true standard of values we would realize that the Silver Jubilee of the Indian Science Congress this year is an event of outstanding importance. For that Congress represents science, and science is the spirit of the age and the dominating factor of the modern world. Even more than the present, the future belongs to science and to those who make friends with science and seek its help for the advancement of humanity.

On this occasion of the Silver Jubilee, I should like to send my greeting to the Indian Science Congress and to the many distinguished scientists, our own countrymen and our visitors from abroad, who are assembling in Calcutta. He who was chosen to preside over this Congress Session had to end his life's journey before he could come here, but that life itself of distinguished service in the cause of science and great achievement has a message for all of us. Though Lord Rutherford is not here, his written word has come to us and, through the courtesy of

the editor, I have been able to glance through his presidential address.

Though I have long been a slave driven in the chariot of Indian politics, with little leisure for other thoughts, my mind has often wandered to the days when as a student I haunted the laboratories of that home of science, Cambridge. And though circumstances made me part company with science, my thoughts turned to it with longing. In later years, through devious processes, I arrived again at science, when I realized that science was not only a pleasant diversion and abstraction, but was of the very texture of life, without which our modern world would vanish away. Politics led me to economics, and this led me inevitably to science and the scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It was science alone that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people.

I have read, therefore, with interest and appreciation Lord Rutherford's remarks on the rôle of science in national life and the need of training and maintaining research workers. And then I wondered how far all this was possible under our present scheme of things. Something could be done no doubt even now, but how little that is to what might and should be done. Lord Rutherford tells us of the need for national planning. I believe that without such planning little that is worth while can be done. But can this be done under present conditions, both political and social? At every step vested interests prevent planning and ordered development, and all our energy and enthusiasm is wasted because of this obstruction. Can we plan on a limited scale for limited objectives? We may do so in some measure, but immediately we come up against new problems and our plans go awry. Life is one organic whole and it cannot be separated into watertight compartments. The Mississippi Valley Committee, writing in their Letter of Transmittal to the Federal Administration of Public Works, U.S.A., refer

to this planning business: "Planning for the use and control of water is planning for most of the basic functions of the life of a nation. We cannot plan for water unless we also reconsider the relevant problems of the land. We cannot plan for water and land unless we plan for the whole people. It is of little use to control rivers unless we also master the conditions which make for the security and freedom of human life."

And so we are driven to think of these basic conditions of human life, of the social system, the economic structure. If science is the dominating factor in modern life, then the social system and economic structure must fit in with science or it is doomed. Only then can we plan effectively and extensively. Lord Rutherford tells us of the need for co-operation between the scientist and the industrialist. That need is obvious. So also is the need for co-operation between the scientist and the politician.

I am entirely in favour of a State organization of research. I would also like the State to send out promising Indian students in large numbers to foreign countries for scientific and technical training. For we have to build India on a scientific foundation, to develop her industries, to change the feudal character of her land system and bring her agriculture in line with modern methods, to develop the social services which she lacks so utterly today, and to do so many other things that shout out to be done. For all this we require a trained personnel.

I should like our Central and Provincial Governments to have expert boards to investigate our problems and suggest solutions. A politician dislikes and sometimes suspects the scientist and expert. But without that expert's aid that politician can achieve little.

And so I hope, with Lord Rutherford, "that in the days to come India will again become the home of science, not only as a form of intellectual activity, but also as a means of furthering the progress of her peoples."

*December 26, 1937.*

## 2

### *The Progress of Science*

ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AT THEIR  
ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN ALLAHABAD ON MARCH 5,  
1938.

FRIENDS,

You are men of learning and many of you have distinguished records in the realm of science. Yet you have honoured me, an outsider, with an invitation to participate in this annual gathering of yours and I have most willingly accepted that invitation. Science and academic halls have not known me for many a long year, and fate and circumstance have led me to the dust and din of the market-place and the field and the factory, where men live and toil and suffer. I have become involved in the great human upheavals that have shaken this land of ours in recent years. Yet in spite of the tumult and movement that have surrounded me, I do not come to you wholly as a stranger. For I too have worshipped at the shrine of science and counted myself as one of its votaries.

Who indeed can afford to ignore science today? At every turn we have to seek its aid and the whole fabric of the world today is of its making. During the ten thousand years of human civilization, science came in with one vast sweep a century and half ago, and during these 150 years it proved more revolutionary and explosive than anything that had gone before. We who live in this age of science live in an environment and under conditions which are totally different from those of the pre-scientific age. But few realize this in its completeness, and they seek to understand the problems of today by a reference to a yesterday that is dead and gone.

Science has brought all these mighty changes and not all

of them have been for the good of humanity. But the most vital and hopeful of the changes that it has brought about has been the development of the scientific outlook in man. It is true that even today vast numbers of people still live mentally in the pre-scientific age, and that most of us, even when we talk glibly of science, betray it in our thought and actions. Even scientists, learned in their particular subjects, often forget to apply the scientific method outside that charmed sphere. And yet it is the scientific method alone that offers hope to mankind and an ending of the agony of the world. This world is racked by fierce conflicts and they are analyzed and called by many names. But essentially the major conflict is between the method of science and the methods opposed to science.

In the early days of science there was much talk of a conflict between religion and science, and science was called materialistic and religion spiritual. That conflict hardly seems real today when science has spread out its wings and ventured to make the whole universe its field of action, and converted solid matter itself into airy nothing. Yet the conflict was real, for it was a conflict between the intellectual tyranny imposed by what was deemed to be religion and the free spirit of man nurtured by the scientific method. Between the two there can be no compromise. For science cannot accept the closing of the windows of the mind, by whatever pleasant name this might be called; it cannot encourage blind faith in someone else's faith. Science therefore must be prepared not only to look up to the heavens and seek to bring them under its control, but also to look down, unafraid, into the pit of hell. To seek to avoid either is not the way of science. The true scientist is the sage unattached to life and the fruits of action, ever seeking truth wheresoever this quest might lead him. To tie himself to a fixed anchorage, from which there is no moving, is to give up that search and to become static in a dynamic world.

Perhaps there is no real conflict between true religion and science, but, if so, religion must put on the garb of science and approach all its problems in the spirit of

science. A purely secular philosophy of life may be considered enough by most of us. Why should we trouble ourselves about matters beyond our ken when the problems of the world insistently demand solution? And yet that secular philosophy itself must have some background, some objective, other than merely material well-being. It must essentially have spiritual values and certain standards of behaviour, and, when we consider these, we enter immediately into the realm of what has been called religion.

But science has invaded this realm from many fronts. It has removed the line that was supposed to separate the world of things from the world of thought, matter from mind; it has peeped into the mind and even the unconscious self of man and sought the inner motives that move him; it has even dared to discuss the nature of ultimate reality. The reality of even a particle of matter, we are told, is not its actuality but its potentiality. Matter becomes just a "group agitation" and nature a theatre for such agitations or "for the inter-relations of activities." Everywhere there is motion, change, and the only unit of things real is the "event," which is, and instantaneously is no more. Nothing is except a happening. If this is the fate of solid matter, what then are the things of the spirit?

How futile the old arguments seem in view of these astonishing developments in scientific thought. It is time we brought our minds into line with the progress of science and gave up the meaningless controversies of an age gone by. It is true that science changes, and there is nothing dogmatic or final about it. But the method of science does not change, and it is to that we must adhere in our thought and activities, in research, in social life, in political and economic life, in religion. We may be specks of dust on a soap-bubble universe, but that speck of dust contained something that was the mind and spirit of man. Through the ages this has grown and made itself master of this earth and drawn power from its innermost bowels as well as from the thunderbolt in the skies. It has tried to fathom the secrets of the universe and brought the vagaries of nature itself to its use. More wonderful than the earth

and the heavens is this mind and spirit of man which grows ever mightier and seeks fresh worlds to conquer.

That is the task of the scientist, but we know that all scientists are not fashioned in the heroic mould, nor are they the philosopher-kings of whom Plato told us in the days of old. Kingliness might not be theirs, but even philosophizing is often lacking, and the day's task follows a narrow sphere and a dull routine. As they specialize, and specialize they must, they lose sight of the larger picture and become pedants out of touch with reality. In India the political conditions under which we have had the misfortune to live have further stunted their growth and prevented them from playing their rightful part in social progress. Fear has often gripped them, as it has gripped so many others in the past, lest by any activity or even thought of theirs they might anger the Government of the day and thus endanger their security and position. It is not under these conditions that science flourishes or scientists prosper. Science requires a free environment to grow. When applied to social purposes, it requires a social objective in keeping with its method and the spirit of the age.

That fear complex which oppressed India has happily disappeared to a large extent owing to the activities and movements initiated by our great organization, the National Congress, and even the poor hungry and miserable peasant has a franker look today and a straighter back. It is time that the shadow of that fear and apprehension vanished from our academic halls also.

We have vast problems to face and to solve. They will not be solved by the politicians alone, for they may not have the vision or the expert knowledge; they will not be solved by the scientists alone, for they will not have the power to do so or the larger outlook which takes everything into its ken. They can and will be solved by the co-operation of the two for a well-defined and definite social objective.

That objective is necessary, for without it our efforts are vain and trivial and lack co-ordination. We have seen in



Soviet Russia how a consciously held objective, backed by co-ordinated effort, can change a backward country into an advanced industrial State with an ever-rising standard of living. Some such method we shall have to pursue if we are to make rapid progress.

The greatest of our problems is that of the land, but intimately connected with it is that of industry. And side by side with these go the social services. All of these will have to be tackled together and our plans co-ordinated. That is a vast undertaking, but it will have to be shouldered.

Soon after the formation of the Congress Ministries, in August last, the Working Committee of the Congress passed a resolution which should interest scientists and experts. I should like, therefore, to draw your attention to it. It ran thus:

“The Working Committee recommends to the Congress Ministries the appointment of a Committee of Experts to consider urgent and vital problems the solution of which is necessary to any scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. Such solution will require extensive surveys and the collection of data, as well as a clearly defined social objective. Many of these problems cannot be dealt with effectively on a provincial basis and the interests of adjoining provinces are interlinked. Comprehensive river surveys are necessary for the formulation of a policy to prevent disastrous floods, to utilize the water for purposes of irrigation, to consider the problem of soil erosion, to eradicate malaria, and for the development of hydro-electric and other schemes. For this purpose the whole river valley will have to be surveyed and investigated, and large-scale State planning resorted to. The development and control of industries require also joint and co-ordinated action on the part of several provinces. The Working Committee advises therefore that, to begin with, an inter-provincial Committee of Experts be appointed to consider the general nature of the problems to be faced, and to

suggest, how, and in what order, these should be tackled. The Expert Committee may suggest the formation of special committees or boards to consider each such problem separately and to advise the provincial Governments concerned as to the joint action to be undertaken.”

The rest of the resolution dealt with the sugar industry.

Something has been done in this latter respect, a Power Alcohol and other committees have been appointed, but I wish more had been done. I should like an aggressive and widespread tackling of our problems by experts. I should like museums and permanent exhibitions for the education of our masses, especially the peasantry, to grow up in every district. I remember the wonderful peasant museums I saw in the U.S.S.R. and compare them with the pitiful agricultural exhibitions that are organized here from time to time. I also remember vividly that splendid and astonishing museum, the Deutsches Museum at Munich,<sup>1</sup> and wonder rather wistfully when some such thing will grow up in India.

It is for this Academy of Sciences to take a lead in all such matters and to advise the Government thereon. The Government should co-operate with them and help them and take full advantage of their expert knowledge. But the Academy must not just wait for the Government to give it a push every time. We have got too much into the habit of waiting for the Government to take the initiative in everything. It is the business of the Government to take the initiative, but it is also the business of the scientists to take the initiative themselves. We cannot wait for each other. We must get a move on.

And so, having taken up so much of your time, I commend you to your labours, and hope that you will have the privilege of serving India and of helping in the progress and advancement of her people.

*March 5, 1938.*

<sup>1</sup> Pandit Nehru's visit to Germany was before 1933.

## B. TRAVEL

### I

#### *In the Surma Valley*

As I journeyed from one valley to another, the railway crept along (for it went very slowly) between thick forests on either side; almost impenetrable, so they seemed. They came right up to the railway line, leaving only a narrow passage grudgingly for us to pass through. Their million eyes seemed to look down with disdain on this human effort, and were full of the hostility of the forest against Man; who had dared so much against it, and cleared it to enlarge his domain. Their thousand mouths were agape with the desire to swallow him and his works.

The call of the jungle and the mountain has always been strong within me, a dweller of cities and of plains though I am, and I gazed at these forests and jungles, fascinated, and wondered what myriad forms of life and what tragedy they hid in their darknesses. Bountiful nature, or nature red in tooth and claw—was it much worse in these forest recesses than in the cities and the dwelling-places of men and women? A wild animal kills for food to satisfy his hunger. He does not kill for sport or for the pleasure of killing. The fierce fights of the jungle are individual fights, not the mass murder that man calls war; there is no wholesale destruction by bomb and poison gas. The comparison seemed to be all in favour of the forest and the wild animals.

So I thought as I watched the passing jungles. Gatherings of people at small stations, and many tribal folk with gracious gifts of fruit and flowers and cloth, woven by themselves, and fresh milk came to welcome me. Bright-eyed Naga<sup>1</sup> children gave me garlands to wear. Some of these

<sup>1</sup> Nagas are a hill tribe in Assam.

tribal people pressed some money on me also, coppers and nickel coins, for Congress work, they said. And I felt shamed and humbled before their clear gaze, full of faith and affection. What of the cities with their selfishness and intrigues and money-grabbing?

And so to our destination and big crowds and rousing welcomes and Bande Mataram shouted vigorously to the skies. A motor journey through the villages with crowds and welcome everywhere, and on to Silchar. The audience at the meeting there seemed to be bigger than what I had been told the population of the city was. Probably many people came from the villages.

For three days I rushed about the valley, chiefly in the Sylhet district. As in the Assam Valley, the roads were generally bad and a prodigious number of ferries had to be crossed. But the charm and beauty of the passing scenery held me and made me forget the roads, and the warmth of the welcome from all manner of people sent a glow to my heart.

Sylhet was definitely Bengal. The language proclaimed it, so also the zamindari tenants who came, and of whom a large number were Muslims. And yet it had much in common with the Valley of the Brahmaputra: tea gardens with their unhappy and helpless-looking labourers, Excluded Areas<sup>1</sup> with tribal people. It was Bengal, but it seemed to possess a definite individuality of its own, hard to define, but something that was in the air.

I was gratified by the enthusiasm for the Congress

<sup>1</sup> Excluded Areas are certain parts of British India where there are considerable "aboriginal" populations. They are excluded from the competence of Indian Provincial Legislatures under the Government of India Act and placed directly under the Central Government of India. The reason advanced for such exclusion is that the tribal and backward people require the special protection of the British authorities and may not be left to the Provincial Governments administered by Indian ministers. These areas provide the semi-slave labour for the plantations, and Indian opinion regards the exclusion as a measure designed in the interest of the planters and to prevent popular opinion affecting the exploited people of these areas.

which the masses showed, an enthusiasm shared by the Muslims as well as the Hindus, and even by the tribal people. Obviously good work had been done there in the past and the harvest was promising. It was pleasing also to find earnest workers in all parts of the district. Sylhet has a good number of them and the human material they deal with is also good. Much, therefore, can be expected of Sylhet. Unfortunately, some local disputes have marred the good work, but these cannot be allowed to continue. The cause is greater than the individual, and the worker who does not realize this has failed to learn the first lesson of a Congressman. But I have confidence in Sylhet, in its people, and in its Congress workers, earnest and keen as they are and with a record of sacrifice for the cause behind them. And so, as I was leaving Sylhet and was asked for a message, I said, "Go ahead, Sylhet!"

In the Bhanubil<sup>1</sup> area of Sylhet I came across a large number of Manipuris. Hundreds of charkhas, with Manipuri women and girls plying the wheel, sat there in ordered array to welcome me, and their menfolk and charming children stood by. I was surprised and pleased to see these Manipuris and delighted to learn of the brave part they had taken in the Civil Disobedience movement. They had also had an economic no-tax movement of their own some years ago, when an attempt was made to enhance their rents.

Here were entirely new people, new to me, and so different from all others I had seen in India. How little we know of our own country and her children! Their features were Mongoloid, they resembled somewhat the Burmese. Indeed, the resemblances to the Burmese were many, and included the dress of their womenfolk. They were extraordinarily neat and clean-looking, and the young girls, with the laughter lurking in their eyes, had quite a smart modern look. The children were charming, with their hair over their foreheads cut short and arranged neatly in front. These fascinating people were

<sup>1</sup> This area came under severe repression during the Civil Disobedience movements of 1931 and 1932.

peasant folk with little or no education, good spinners and weavers, taking pride in themselves. They were all Vaishnavas<sup>1</sup> by religion, but even here some Burmese customs had crept in and, as I was told, their marriages could be dissolved.

In the hills between the two valleys there lies the State of Manipur, which is the centre of these people, and from there this Bhanubil branch had migrated some generations back. When did the original stock come from Burma or elsewhere, I wondered. They were called backward, I suppose, and yet with education and opportunity, what could not be done with this attractive and intelligent-looking people?

In Sylhet I came across many Muslim fishermen, who complained to me that they were treated as social outcasts and as a kind of depressed class<sup>2</sup> by their own co-religionists.

In Sylhet also many Nagas from the surrounding hills came to visit me with greetings and gifts. And from them and others I heard a story which India ought to know and to cherish. It was the story of a young woman of their tribe belonging to the Koboï clan in the Naga Hills. She was of the priestly class and she had the unique opportunity among her people to receive some education in a mission school, where she reached the ninth or tenth class. Gindallo was her name and she was about nineteen six years ago when civil disobedience blazed over the length and breadth of India. News of Gandhi and the Congress reached her in her hill abode and found an echo in her heart. She dreamed of freedom for her people and an ending of the galling restrictions they suffered from, and she raised the banner of independence and called her people to rally round it. Perhaps she thought, rather prematurely, that the British Empire was fading out. But that Empire still functioned effectively and aggressively and it took vengeance on her and her people. Many villages were burnt and destroyed and this heroic girl was captured and sentenced to transportation for life. And

<sup>1</sup> Worshippers of Vishnu.

<sup>2</sup> Lower caste.

now she lies in some prison in Assam, wasting her bright young womanhood in dark cells and solitude. Six years she has been there. What torment and suppression of spirit they have brought to her, who in the pride of her youth dared to challenge an Empire! She can roam no more in the hill country through the forest glades, or sing in the fresh crisp air of the mountains. This wild young thing sits cabined in darkness, with a few yards, may be, of space in the daytime, eating her fiery heart in desolation and confinement. And India does not even know of this brave child of her hills, with the free spirit of the mountains in her. —But her own people remember their *Gindallo Rani* and think of her with love and pride. And a day will come when India also will remember her and cherish her, and bring her out of her prison cell.

But our so-called Provincial Autonomy will not help in bringing about this release. More is needed. For the Excluded Areas are outside the ken of our provincial ministries, and, strange to say, they are even more cut off from us now than they were before the advent of "Provincial Autonomy." Even questions about *Gindallo* were not allowed to be put in the Assam Assembly. So we progress to Swaraj through the Government of India Act, 1935.

Darkness had set in and my tour was approaching its appointed end. We reached Habiganj late in the evening, and after the meeting there hurried on to Shaistaganj to catch our train. The crescent moon hung over the horizon, with its silvery brightness gone and looking gloomy and yellow. I thought of the past twelve days with all their quick movement and crowds and enthusiasm, and it all seemed like a dream that was over. And I thought of *Gindallo, the Rani*, sitting in her prison cell. What thoughts were hers, what regrets, what dreams?

December 9, 1937.

<sup>1</sup> The matter of *Gindallo Rani* was pursued by Congress leaders in India when Provincial Autonomy came, but without success.

## 2

### *In the Valley of the Brahmaputra*

EIGHT days are an all too brief period for the Assam Valley, and yet this was all I gave to it, and then I sped away to another beautiful valley. During these eight days I visited many towns and villages and had a glimpse of the rich variety of this province and of the hospitable people who inhabit it. I loved the uncommon combination of semi-tropical scenery and snow-topped mountains with a noble river running between them. Everywhere I had the warmest of welcomes, and I am deeply grateful to all classes and peoples for their exceeding courtesy. That courtesy was extended to me by European and Indian alike, and even the railway authorities gave every facility for my travelling. But above all I rejoiced to experience the love and goodwill of the masses who came in such large numbers to meet me and hear me. Throughout my tour I was enveloped and stimulated by the abundance of this affection, and I shall remember it with joy and gratitude. I shall carry away with me also, imprinted on my mind, the silent beauty of the dawn as we sailed over the bosom of the Brahmaputra and the snow-covered peaks in the distance caught the first rays of the rising sun.

Many places I visited and saw, but there was one notable exception. I am sorry I could not go to Shillong. I am sorry also that I could not visit the tribal areas. I met, however, many of the members of these tribes—Khasis, Kacharis, Ravas, Garos, Lalungs, Mikirs, Miris, and Nagas—and was attracted by them and by the bright faces of their children. They deserve every help and sympathy from Congressmen, and I hope they will receive it.

Rush tours like mine involve a great deal of organizing and give much trouble to those in charge of them. This burden fell naturally on my comrades of the Congress,



and I must express my deep gratitude to them for all they did. The Congress is a living vital force in Assam, as I saw and felt everywhere I went during these eight days, but the organizational side has been somewhat neglected, and so the province has not pulled its full weight in the past. I hope and believe that this deficiency will be made good now and the great enthusiasm of the people will be organized and disciplined to right ends.

I came up against particular problems affecting Assam and exercising the minds of the people of the province, and yet all these were secondary before the major problem of India—the poverty of the people, and this was terribly in evidence in the province. It is this problem of poverty and that of Swaraj and national freedom that overshadow all local problems and we must always remember this if we are to retain a proper perspective and work effectively. In a sense Assam is fortunate; for the very fact that it has been somewhat neglected and its development has been slow opens out promising vistas of rapid development on a planned basis, greater production of wealth and a rising standard of living for her people. Elsewhere in India I have seldom had this sense of latent power and resources which the jungles and unoccupied spaces of Assam have given me. The place cries aloud for the mind and the hand of man to develop it, but this can only be for the public good if it is organized and planned and deliberately aims at the betterment of the masses.

Among the various local problems that the people of Assam think about there are: Opium, the future of Sylhet, immigration and the Line System, the tea gardens, and more especially the labour employed there, and the excluded and partially excluded areas with the various tribal folk inhabiting them. Then there is that precious commodity, oil, more valuable in the modern world than gold.

### OPIUM

The opium question of Assam has for long years excited the attention of all India and even of other parts of

the world. The Government, while expressing appreciation of public sentiment, has resisted it also in its desire to cling on to the opium revenue. Yet it is true that the opium consumption has gone down considerably and with it the revenue. Probably it could have been stamped out almost completely if the Government had pursued a more rigorous policy during the past dozen years or more. There is a tendency now, I was told, to issue licences for opium in increasing numbers to almost everyone who applies for them and the age limit of fifty is seldom enforced. The time has certainly come when a more vigorous and effective policy should be pursued and the issue of licences should be a rarity and only for definite medical reasons. It should be possible to reduce opium consumption almost to vanishing point within two or three years. There is a danger of opium smuggling increasing, but I think this is magnified and can be checked. There is probably more smuggling going on now via the Indian States in Rajputana and Central India than across the border. But this smuggling is still small compared to the authorized sale of opium.

There seems also to be a tendency on the part of the Government to increase its liquor revenue to replace its diminishing income from opium. This must be checked or else one evil will give place to another.

### SYLHET

The future of the Surma Valley is a living question in Assam and the Assamese are keenly desirous that Sylhet should be transferred to the administrative province of Bengal, so as to leave them an area which is linguistically more homogeneous. The people of Sylhet, I found, were equally in favour of this change and, on the face of it, the desire is reasonable. Sylhet is not only linguistically Bengali, but its economy is more allied to that of Bengal than of Assam proper. There is the permanent settlement there, as in Bengal, while in Assam peasant proprietors, with a varying assessment, are usually to be found.

The Congress has all along laid stress on a linguistic division of provinces. This corresponds with cultural areas, and it is far easier for the people of such an area to develop educationally and otherwise on the basis of their mother tongue. Indeed, the Surma Valley has long formed part of the Congress province of Bengal. Thus it is clear that, so far as the Congress is concerned, there is no doubt as to what the future of Sylhet should be—it should go to Bengal. I feel, however, that we have to face today far more important and vital problems, and the next few years are pregnant with the possibilities of vast changes. Therefore we should not spend our energy too much on trying to bring about the small changes, which, however desirable, do not affect the main issue. We should certainly press for these relatively minor changes, but always looking at them in the proper perspective and not losing ourselves in them. When the big changes come, as come they must, the other will follow rapidly.

#### IMMIGRATION AND THE LINE SYSTEM<sup>1</sup>

Immigration and the Line System is a far more vital problem of Assam. I hesitate to give a detailed opinion on this issue as it requires expert knowledge which I do not claim to possess. Pre-eminently it is a question to be considered by experts, economists and others. And yet there are some considerations which seem to me to govern this question. It is right that the basic consideration should be the development of Assam and the betterment of the people of Assam. But Assam cannot be isolated from the rest of India, nor can any artificial barriers be put between them. Even laws cannot for long override economic factors. Assam is partly an undeveloped province with a relatively sparse population, while on two sides of it are thickly populated areas with land-hungry masses. It is true that large parts of Assam are moun-

<sup>1</sup> Cheap labour for the plantations and other purposes is brought in. This immigrant population is housed in "Lines," rows of small dwellings segregated from the rest of the community.

tainous country and some other parts are liable to periodic floods. Still there is plenty of room for development, and at present there is a want of equilibrium between Assam and the surrounding provinces, and this will always result in economic forces seeking to restore an equilibrium. These realities or these forces cannot be ignored, but if they are properly understood and directed to right ends, we can ultimately produce an equilibrium which is for the benefit and advancement of the people of Assam.

It seems to me that throwing the unoccupied land open to unrestricted immigration without any planning or recognized end in view will be peculiarly unfortunate. We have a sufficiency and more of difficult land problems in India, indeed they are the major problems of the country, and it would be folly to add to them in Assam. Assam is fortunate in being in a position to carry out large schemes of land reform without coming up against vested interests which are difficult to dislodge. For a Government to create fresh vested interests is to add to its own difficulties and tie its own hands and feet, as well as to encumber the next generation.

It is generally believed now that land reform should move in the direction of large collective farms or State farms. The Assam Government has a fine opportunity to work to this end. Instead of just allowing odd people to get parcels of land and to cultivate them as they will in an individualistic way, it should start large State farms and try to develop Collectives. Assam-born people should be given preference in these, but immigrants should certainly be accepted. The capital for these undertakings should be raised, if necessary, by loan. It will be a profitable investment. Such State farms and Collectives should work out a planned scheme of land reform in the whole province and begin by giving effect to it in their own areas. With success in these areas, the scheme can easily be extended to other parts of the province.

I do not know if the present Government of Assam has vision enough and can think or act in these terms. Probably not. In any event, nothing should be done

which might come in the way of such development in the future. If land is to be allotted to individuals it should be given on specific conditions, such as no right of sale or mortgage and the State to have the right to organize Collectives when it so desires. To give the right of sale or mortgage will result in the building up of large estates. This, as well as speculation in land, has to be avoided. The parcel of land allotted should not be too small to be uneconomic for a family and not too large to convert the holder into a landlord subsisting on the labour of others. The size can be fixed after local enquiry. In allotting land, preference should be given to Assam-born people, and promising immigrants should then be welcomed.

The present Line System seems to me obviously a transitional affair which cannot continue as such for long. To remove it suddenly and leave the field open to unrestricted immigration would result in producing all manner of entanglements and future problems. To keep it as it is seems to me undesirable. The principle is bad and we cannot encourage it in India. It is also bad to confine immigrants in a particular area and so prevent them from being assimilated by the people of the province. This results in increasing separatism and hostility between adjoining areas, and a terribly difficult problem is created for future generations. The very basis of immigration must be the assimilation of the immigrant. If he remains an alien and an outsider, he is a disrupting force in the body politic. From a sociological point of view it is admitted now that it is dangerous even to keep colonies of criminals apart, as they deteriorate when they are removed from the healthy influences of normal social life. They concentrate on their criminality.

The Assamese, however, fear that, instead of assimilating the immigrants, they might be assimilated by them, as they come in such vast numbers. Some comments in the last Census Report, where the immigrants from Eastern Bengal are compared to a "mass movement of a large body of ants" have produced a powerful im-

pression on the mind of the Assamese, and they fear a suppression and almost an extinction of their culture, language, and individuality. Though there is some reason for this apprehension, I think it is exaggerated. Culture and individuality in a people do not depend entirely on numbers, but on something more vital. Even small minorities, enveloped by alien and hostile peoples, have retained their culture, language, and individuality, and even intensified them. If the Assamese have this vital element in them, as I believe they have, they will not be affected much by large bodies of immigrants coming in. They will influence the latter far more than they will be influenced by them, especially as the immigrants are likely to be of a lower cultural level.

But still, as I have said, it would be undesirable to have unchecked immigration without plan or system. Under a planned development the possible dangers will be avoided and the wealth of Assam will grow and the Assamese people will prosper, while at the same time affording scope for immigrants to come in and so gradually to establish an equilibrium between Assam and the adjoining provinces.

### TEA GARDENS

The tea gardens cover a good part of Assam, and the province might indeed be called the Land of Tea. I passed by innumerable such gardens, especially in Upper Assam, and they had a prosperous look about them. A tea garden can be judged to some extent from its external appearance, and I must say that most of these gardens in the upper valley looked clean and efficient, more so than the gardens I had seen some years ago in Ceylon. The bushes were neat and close together, and their surfaces formed an unbroken and uniform expanse.

But the shine of the shoe is not the test of its fit or the comfort it gives to the wearer. I suppose the garden labourers are not looked upon as the wearers of the shoe in question. But I was more interested in them than in

the quality of the tea produced or the dividends of the companies. And the look of these labourers, men and women, was not good and their complaints were many. Some progress has been made, in law at least, from the days when these workers were indentured coolies and practically in bondage. But, in effect, I doubt if the change has made material difference to their lives. They had a hunted look about them, and fear peeped out of their eyes. They were poor, of course.

They have no organization and are not allowed to have any. I am told that outsiders are not encouraged to go to them or to their Lines, and they live more or less secluded lives. They have been given special representation in the Provincial Assembly, but the measure of their helplessness is this, that their so-called representatives represent the interests of their employers and always side with them. They dare not elect the people of their choice. This is a deplorable state of affairs, and to remedy this utter helplessness is far more important than some paternal legislation to remove minor grievances. The employers themselves should realize that these primitive labour methods cannot continue, and even their own interests require that labour should be made more self-reliant.

I think the immediate need is for a proper enquiry to be carried out into labour conditions, and the Provincial Assembly might well appoint a committee for this purpose, which should go thoroughly into the matter. I hope the employers will co-operate with such a committee and give it every facility. Facilities for labour organization should also be given and, as such organizations grow up, they should be recognized and encouraged.

I might add that, so far as I was concerned, I had some facilities given to me by the tea garden authorities to meet the labourers. The tea-planters were courteous to me in this and other matters, and I am grateful to them. Large crowds of workers met me at meetings and by the wayside, but during my rush tour I had no time to go deeply into their problems.

I was surprised to learn that the tea companies paid exceedingly little in the way of revenues to the State for the land occupied by them. They pay far less than the ordinary agriculturist. Why this particular favour should be shown to them I do not know. It seems unfair to the State and to the agriculturists.

### EXCLUDED AREAS

Vast tracts in Assam are included in the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. The people living here are cut off from the rest of India, and we know little about them. Curiously enough, the Government of India Act of 1935 has widened the gap and made them still more unapproachable. And yet no people in India require more helpful sympathy and co-operation from their countrymen than these tribal folk and others who live cut off from us in these areas. I like these people and feel drawn to them, and I hope the Congress organization and our Provincial Assemblies will do everything in their power to remove their disabilities and to encourage education and industry among them. Here also investigation is needed. Some of the tribal people I met were obviously intelligent and, given the right education and encouragement, would go ahead.

### INDUSTRY

Apart from the tea plantations and oil, modern industry is hardly in evidence in Assam. At Dhubri there is a match factory belonging to the Swedish Match Trust, and this has gained an unenviable notoriety during the past year because of a lock-out and strike. This strike and lock-out lasted for nearly a year, and this long-drawn-out struggle is itself evidence of the deep feeling of grievance among the workers, who had continued their struggle despite hunger and destitution. Their demands were reasonable. It is bad enough that the workers should be starved into submission anywhere, but



it is worse that powerful foreign trusts, trying to cloak themselves under the garb of Swadeshi,<sup>1</sup> should thus exploit their workers in India. I think it should be made perfectly clear that the Congress strongly disapproves of this and will try to put an end to it when it has the chance to do so.

There is obviously room for the development of industry in Assam, both cottage and large-scale. Weaving is widespread, and every middle-class girl has a loom. An essential part of her training consists in the practical knowledge of weaving. Efforts to teach cottage industries to Harijans<sup>2</sup> and tribal people have met with success, and these could easily be widely extended with excellent results. I saw an efficient little school and ashram run for this purpose by the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh. The work was limited in scope for lack of funds.

What large-scale industries can be developed in Assam I am not competent to say. Paper-making is evidently one of them, for the forests run wild with bamboos and other plants which are said to be good for the purpose. I was surprised to learn that the tea-planters import their wooden cases for tea from abroad, mostly from Japan, and a vast number of such cases are used. There is a plentiful supply of good wood at their very doorstep, and with suitable machinery, all the wooden cases required can be produced locally with advantage to the province and to the tea industry.

At Digboi one sees the familiar iron derricks against the skyline, and they announce to the visitor that he is entering an outpost of the great Empire of Oil. The Assam Oil Company is associated with the Burma Oil Company, and the two together are parts of the Shell combine. This accumulated wealth of past ages is being pumped out at Digboi, but Assam, the owner of this wealth, hardly profits, for the royalties go to the Central

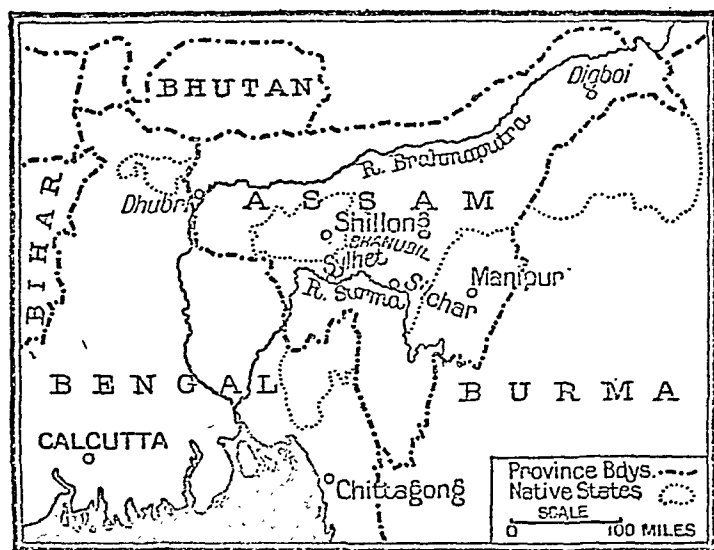
<sup>1</sup> Indian industry or Indian manufacture.

<sup>2</sup> The term "Harijan," which literally means "born of God," was first used by Mr. Gandhi for the "untouchables." It has now gained currency all over India.

revenues of India. This is unfair to the people of Assam, and there is an agitation against it which seems to me to be justified. The price of petrol is higher in Assam than in Calcutta or elsewhere. This remarkable example of capitalist economy was in evidence in Burma also. Burmese or Assamese petrol is cheaper in London than in the country which produces it, where the oil is pumped and refined.

And so good-bye to the valley of the Brahmaputra, and across the forests and over the hills to Silchar and Sylhet in the Surma Valley.

December 9, 1937.



### 3

## *Escape*

THE Haripura Congress<sup>1</sup> was over. The wonder city of bamboo that had risen on the banks of the Tapti was looking deserted. Only a day or two before its streets had been full of an animated, jostling crowd, grave and gay, talking, discussing, laughing, and feeling that they were taking part in the shaping of India's destiny. But those scores of thousands had suddenly departed for their distant homes and a sense of emptiness hung in the still air. Even the dust storm had abated. Having a little leisure for the first time since I came, I wandered by the Tapti bank and, in the darkness of the approaching night, went up to the edge of the flowing water. I felt a little sad when I thought that this magnificent city and camp, that had risen over the fields and waste lands, would vanish soon, leaving hardly a trace behind. Only the memory would endure.

But the sadness passed, and the desire that I had long nursed, the wish to go away to some far-off place, became strong and possessed me. It was not physical tiredness, but a weariness of the mind which hungered for change and refreshment. Political life was an exhausting business and I had had enough of it for a while. Long habit and routine held me fast, but distaste for this daily round grew, and while I answered questions and spoke as amiably as I could to comrades and friends, my mind was elsewhere. It was wandering over the mountains of the north with their deep valleys and snowy peaks, and precipices and gentle slopes covered with pine trees and deodars. It panted for escape from the troubles and

<sup>1</sup> The annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1938 was held in the village of Haripura, till then unknown to the outside world.

problems that encompassed us, for peace and quiet and the gentle sigh of the wind.

At last I was going to have my way, to pander to my secret and long-cherished desire. How could I trouble myself with Ministries coming or going, or the melting-pot of international affairs, when the door of escape lay open before me?

I hastened north to my city of Allahabad and found, to my dismay, that some trouble was brewing. I grew irritated and angry with myself. Was I going to be thwarted and prevented from going to the mountains because fools and bigots wanted to create communal trouble? I reasoned with myself and said that nothing much could happen, the situation would improve, and there were plenty of sensible people about. So I argued with and deluded myself, possessed by the desire to go away and escape. Like a coward I crept away when my work lay in Allahabad.

But soon I had forgotten Allahabad and its troubles, and even the problems of India receded into some corner of my brain. The intoxication of the mountain air filled me as we climbed up the winding road to Almora in the Kumaun Hills. From Almora we went further up to Khali, riding on sturdy hill ponies for the last part of our journey.

I was in Khali, where I had longed to go for the past two years, and it was pleasant to be there. The sun was setting and there was a glow on the hill-sides and a hush in the valleys. My eyes searched for Nanda Devi and her companion peaks of the snowy range, but they were hidden by light clouds.

Day succeeded day and I drank deep of the mountain air and took my fill of the sight of the snows and the valleys. How beautiful and full of peace they were, and the world's ills seemed far away and unreal. Towards the west and the south-east deep valleys, two or three thousand feet below us, curved away into the distance. Towards the north towered Nanda Devi and her white-clad companions. Fierce precipices, almost straight cut,

sometimes led to the depths below, but more often the curves of the hill-sides were soft and rounded, like a woman's breast. Or they would be cut up in terraces where green fields witnessed to the industry of man.

In the early morning I lay bare-bodied in the open and the gentle-eyed sun of the mountains took me into his warm embrace. The cold wind from the snows made me shiver a little, but the sun would come to my rescue and fill me with warmth and well-being.

Sometimes I would lie under the pine trees and listen to the voice of the wandering wind, whispering many strange things into my ears, and lulling my senses, and cooling the fever in my brain. Finding me unguarded and open to attack, it would cunningly point out the folly of men's ways in the world below, their unceasing strife, their passions and hatred, their bigotry in the name of religion, the corruption of their politics, the degradation of their ideals. Was it worth while going back to them and wasting one's life's effort in dealings with them? Here there was peace and quiet and well-being, and for companions we had the snows and the mountains and the hill-sides covered with a multitude and a variety of trees and flowers, and the singing of birds. So whispered the wind, softly and cunningly, and in the enchantment of the spring day I allowed her to whisper.

It was early spring still in the mountains, though down below summer was already peeping in. On the hill-sides the rhododendron flowers made bright red patches which could be seen from afar. The fruit trees were full of bloom, and millions of tiny leaves were on the point of coming out to cover with their fresh, tender, green beauty the nakedness of many of the trees.

Four miles from Khali, fifteen hundred feet higher up, lay Binsar. We went there and saw a sight which we can never forget. Stretched out in front of us was a six-hundred-mile stretch of the Himalayan snowy range, from the mountains of Tibet to those of Nepal, and in the centre towered Nanda Devi. There was Badri Nath and Kedarnath and many another famous place in that wide

expanse, and just across them lay Kailas and Mansarovar. What a magnificent sight that was, and I gazed at it spell-bound, awe-stricken with the majesty of it. And I grew a little angry with myself when I thought that I had missed this overwhelming beauty, in a corner of my own province, all these long years, though I had wandered all over India and visited many distant countries. How many people in India had seen it or even heard of it? How many of the tens of thousands who visit annually the cheap and tawdry hill-stations in search of jazz and bridge?

So the days passed and contentment grew in my mind, but also a fear that my brief holiday would soon end. Sometimes a huge bundle of letters and newspapers would come, and I viewed them with distaste. The post office was ten miles away and I was half inclined to let my mail rest there, but old habit was too strong, and the possibility of finding a letter from some dear one far away made me open the door to these unwelcome intruders from outside.

Suddenly there came a rude shock. Hitler was marching into Austria, and I heard the tramp of barbarian feet over the pleasant gardens of Vienna. Was this the prelude to that world catastrophe which had hung over us for so long? Was this war? I forgot Khali and the snows and the mountains, and my body became taut and my mind tense. What was I doing here, in a remote corner of the mountains, when the world was on the brink of war and evil triumphed and had to be countered and checked? Yet what could I do?

Another shock came—communal riots in Allahabad, many heads broken and a few persons killed. A few men dead or alive did not matter much, but what was this disgusting madness and folly that degraded our people from time to time?

There was no peace for me then even in Khali, no escape. How could I escape from the thoughts that tormented my mind, how could I run away from my trembling heart? I realized that we had to face the world's passions and endure the world's anguish, dream-

ing sometimes, it may be, of the world's deliverance. Was this dream just a phantasy of the dreamer's mind or was it something more? Will it ever take shape?

For a few days more I stayed on in Khali, but a vague disquiet filled my mind. Slowly a measure of peace returned to me as I gazed at those white mountains, calm and inscrutable and untouched by human folly. They would remain there whatever man did, and even if the present generation committed suicide or went to oblivion by some slower process, the spring would still come to the hill-sides, and the wind rustle through the pine trees, and the birds sing.

But meanwhile there was no escape whatever of good or ill the future might hold. There was no escape except to some extent in action. No Khali could smother the mind or drug the heart into forgetfulness. And so to Khali I bade good-bye, sixteen days after I had come there, and wistfully I took my last long look at the white peaks of the north and imprinted their noble outline on the canvas of my mind.

*April 7, 1938.*

## *A Visit to Garhwal*

My sister Vijaya Lakshmi<sup>1</sup> and I have just spent five days in Garhwal. During these many years I have travelled a good deal in India and I have visited every district of the United Provinces, often more than once. But Garhwal remained unvisited except for a few hours given to Dogadda a year and a half ago. I was eager to fill this gap, and, as always, the mountains attracted me. But the lack of communications necessitated a longer period, and so I hesitated. Yet the insistence of friends in Garhwal and the consciousness of my own failure in the past induced me at last to repair this omission and to find a few days for these mountain valleys. I was happy to have as companions Vijaya Lakshmi and Raja Hutheesing as well as comrades from Garhwal.

It was a delightful visit, though a strenuous one, and we have returned somewhat stiff of body, but with our minds full of pleasant memories. We visited Gochar, Devaprayag, Srinagar, and Pauri, and many villages on the way. Our journeying was done by aeroplane, by car, on horseback, and on foot, riding being the principal means adopted owing to the lack of cart roads. The aeroplane took us all the way to Badrinath and Kedarnath, and we had a near view of the snowy peaks which dominate these ancient places of pilgrimage. We could not land there and had to come back some way to Gochar, where we landed. A great welcome awaited us there from the mountain folk, and then we returned, having completed by air within five hours a journey that takes as many weeks on foot. From the air we saw Garhwal

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi's pandit, a leading Congresswoman, and for two years Minister of Public Health in the United Provinces Government.



spread out below us with its bare mountains and its numerous valleys, with rivers winding through them. We were in the land of birth of the Ganga, and this noble river, which we had known and loved so well in its rich and stately maturity, appeared before us now in its eager and joyful youth and its bubbling and gurgling childhood.

Having done with the air journey, we took to the road and followed the Ganga from Rishikesh to Devaprayag, where the Bhagirathi meets the Alaknanda and, joining together, drop their own particular names and become the Ganga, the river that has held India's heart captive for so many thousands of years. Perched on precipices between the two rivers and across them sits the little town of Devaprayag, looking down on the swiftly flowing currents as they rush through rock-hewn gorges to meet and intermingle in a warm embrace.

We followed the Alaknanda now on horseback, while *sanyasins* and weary pilgrims for Badrinath trudged slowly on foot, their living faith making light of their burdens and their sufferings. The bridle path was good; occasionally it narrowed and a precipice, leading all too swiftly to the river far below, yawned below us. Occasional cheers from the passers by and the throwing of flowers were not as welcome as they usually are, for they made our horses shy, and the precipices were not inviting.

The sun was hot and there was little shade, and the journey grew oppressive. But throughout some kind of wild jasmine flowers lined the way and the smell of jasmine enveloped us. Huge tree-like cactus plants were frequent. There were no jungles, and the hillsides were bare-looking, and even the terraced fields had a barren and desolate look.

We reached Srinagar, situated in a broad and pleasant valley. The Alaknanda flowed swiftly by it, carrying timber from its upper reaches. The town was a small one, fallen greatly from its old estate when it was the capital of the Garhwali kingdom. Here we stayed for two days and took part in the conference that was being

held there and met many old comrades. We then proceeded to Pauri on the hill-top which gazes at the magnificent range of the northern snows, Badrinath and Kedarnath, the Chaukhamba and Trishul, and even Nanda Devi. All along the route we were met by the people from the villages, men, women and children, who with warm-hearted affection came to greet us.

A busy programme in Pauri and a night there, and then a long and weary ride by a little frequented and badly kept route to Devaprayag, with halts and meetings on the way. From Devaprayag to Hardwar and back to the railway train.

The abiding impression of Garhwal was one of isolation and poverty. It was extraordinary how near we were to the rest of the world and yet how cut off from it. Twenty miles represented now a hard day's journeying, as it must have been a thousand years ago or more. During these ages that had gone by there had hardly been any improvement in communications and journeys were on foot or rarely on horseback. Only the telegraph wire spoke to us of science and the modern world. The lack of cart roads throughout this wide-flung district is astonishing and for half a century there has been an insistent demand, ever growing louder, for a good road. We had heard of this before, but we had not realized the passion behind it. Everywhere all sorts of people demanded and begged and shouted for a road. Everything else was secondary to them and swaraj itself took the semblance of a road leading from the heart of the mountains to the plains below. They told us that it was a matter of life or death for them. "Give us a road or we die," they pleaded.

Why has this road-making been delayed so long in Garhwal? It was expensive, of course, but equally expensive roads have been made all over India in mountainous regions. During the period of the World War the people of Garhwal were soothed by promises of a railway and a survey at a cost of many lakhs of rupees was actually made. But neither the railway nor a road materialised. If there had been a regiment stationed in Garhwal or any

considerable British official population a road would have appeared soon enough. But officials do not look with favour on a sojourn in Garhwal and consider it as a kind of exile. Even inspections by high officials seldom take place there. Still the road would have come if there had not been some definite objection to it on the part of the British Government. I imagine this objection was based on the desire on the part of the Government to keep Garhwal isolated and immune from political influences, as it was one of their chief recruiting areas. Garhwali regiments are well known, but I was surprised to learn that thousands of people from the district served in the armed police in Bengal. They are terribly poor and the land cannot sustain them in its present condition; they have hardly any industries, and so inevitably they seek employment elsewhere.

We met large numbers of school children and I liked to ask them many questions. I found that over ninety per cent. of them had never seen a railway train, or a motor car, or even a carriage. But they had seen an aeroplane flying over them; only some days before we had ourselves flown across.

Garhwal must have a road and that soon. It will never progress without it. But a road is not enough, and what is urgently needed is to improve the productive capacity of the people. Apart from the question of the road the chief complaints were the lack of water, the heavy assessment, and the lack of medical help and schools. If a person fell seriously ill, it was not even possible to carry him to some hospital near by. He simply died or, if he was lucky, survived. The demand for education was great, even for girls, but the schools were few and far between.

The lack of water for the fields seemed strange, for there were several rivers with plenty of it and occasional springs. And yet fields in the river valleys were lying dry and elsewhere they were worse off. We saw large numbers of terraced fields which had been cut out of the hillsides with enormous labour, lying desolate and untended. They

had been allowed to run waste as it was not considered worth while to cultivate them. Partly this problem of water has been aggravated by the lack of forests and the general barrenness of the hillsides. Why Garhwal has such few forests while Kumaun abounds in them I do not know. The soil is as good, and other conditions appear equally favourable. Is it then just the fault of man—of the ignorant cultivator or the incompetent or careless Government?

Yet with all its poverty and barrenness Garhwal gave us the idea of great potential strength and resources. There was water power running to waste everywhere when it could be converted into electricity and life-giving power for fields and industries. Probably there were plenty of minerals in that vast area only waiting to be developed.

Let the road come to Garhwal. But equally urgent is an inquiry into its power resources and minerals. These power resources could supply electric power not only to Garhwal but to a large part of the province. Thus two expert inquiries seem called for immediately—one into the utilization of water power and the building up of hydro-electric schemes, and the other into the mineral resources of the area.

While these schemes develop, it may be possible to put up inexpensive pumps to send water up the river to the fields above. A scheme for afforestation should also be inquired into and begun.

Probably there are considerable opportunities for the development of cottage industries in Garhwal. Of these wool-spinning and weaving are the most obvious and they can be easily developed. An attempt to do so in Kumaun is meeting with success, and there is every reason to believe that it will meet with equal success in Garhwal.

Bee-keeping is common in Garhwal, but the methods adopted are primitive and wasteful. These could be easily improved.

I must confess that I found a certain lack of enterprise among the people of Garhwal. They seemed to be resigned to their sad fate, and their only reaction to it was

to ask others to do something for them. They seldom thought in terms of doing something themselves. This was a natural outcome of long and distressing poverty and suppression and it will pass. For the Garhwalis are a brave and sturdy people and, given the chance, they will make good. They have become dear to India for the gallant deed<sup>1</sup> they performed eight years ago in the North-West Frontier Province, when civil disobedience raged throughout India and the blood in our veins tingled as we took our part, big or small, in the struggle for freedom.

ALLAHABAD,

*May 10, 1938.*

<sup>1</sup> During the civil disobedience movement in 1930 troops were used against Congress volunteers offering civil resistance. There were a number of shootings, particularly in the North-West Frontier Province, on unarmed and peaceful demonstrators. In one instance, a party of soldiers in the Garhwali Rifles disobeyed orders, when called upon to fire on Congressmen who were participating in the Civil Disobedience movement. The Garhwalis laid down their arms, protesting that the soldier's duty was to defend his country against a foreign invader and not to shoot down his own countrymen. The men concerned were tried by court-martial and sentenced to long periods of imprisonment.

## 5

### *The Monsoon Comes to Bombay*

I LIKE Bombay. There is space. The sea and the cool breezes that blow in from the sea temper the heat. The harbour twinkles with many lights, and the Back Bay, though it has lost its old sweep and graceful curve, is still attractive, and at night the long rows of lights make it singularly pleasing to the sight. I do not particularly fancy the new buildings that are growing up with such rapidity, and yet a distant view of these monotonous and rather dull structures is pleasing enough.

I like Bombay for the warmth of friendship that I find there. Because of this a visit to Bombay is always something I look forward to. But Bombay has lost some of its attraction. A film of sadness covers it, since a year ago a dear friend passed away.

Yet much as I like Bombay, I weary of it after a few days and want to get away. Used to the cold and heat of the north, accommodating myself to the cold wind as well as the scorching *loo*, I find this intermediate weather, which changes little, an enervating experience. It seems so static, so moderate, that my changing moods do not fit in with it.

I have been to Bombay so many times, but I had never seen the coming of the monsoon there. I had been told and I had read that this coming of the first rains was an event in Bombay; they came with pomp and circumstance and overwhelmed the city with their lavish gift. It rains hard in most parts of India during the monsoon, and we all know this. But it was different in Bombay, they said; there was a ferocity in this sudden first meeting of the rain-laden clouds with land. The dry land was lashed by the pouring torrents and converted into a temporary sea.

Bombay was not static then; it became elemental, dynamic, changing.

So I looked forward to the coming of the monsoon and I became a watcher of the skies, waiting to spot the heralds that preceded the attack. A few showers came. Oh, that was nothing, I was told; the monsoon has yet to come. Heavier rains followed, but I ignored them and waited for some extraordinary happening. While I waited I learnt from various people that the monsoon had definitely come and established itself. Where was the pomp and circumstance, and the glory of the attack, and the combat between cloud and land, and the surging and lashing sea? Like a thief in the night the monsoon had come to Bombay, as well it might have done in Allahabad or elsewhere. Another illusion gone.

*June 15, 1939.*

*Flying during the Monsoon*

I HAVE done a fair amount of flying in India, both in the north and in the south. But this was my first experience of flying during the monsoon, and I saw a new and pleasing sight. Ordinarily the countryside looks dry and parched, and the eye gets tired by the monotony of the landscape. Not so during the monsoon. We all know how the monsoon brings welcome rain to the parched earth, and the pleasant smell of fresh rain-water on the dry land, and the greenery that blossoms at that magic touch. But to see this from on high brought home this change more vividly. Everything was green, though there were many shades to that greenery; and abundant water often flooded the fields. The trees stood out, cool and clean-looking, and even the little villages that dotted the landscape lost some of their drab appearance. The eye rested and lingered over this sight and did not get tired. India seemed to be a green and pleasant land, rich in beauty and the wealth of its soil.

We flew low, usually about five or six hundred feet, and the land rushed past us. Above us were the clouds, and we had to keep under them in order to avoid blind flying. And because we flew low we saw the landscape in some detail and observed men and women working in the fields and cattle straying lazily on the pasture-grounds. We could take in that picture from that height, and, while seeing a wide expanse of earth, yet be near enough to be of it. Sometimes a hill would approach us, and we would just go over it and leave it far behind. Sometimes rain poured down on us and battered on the glass screen. We did not worry much about it. Nor did we really mind air pockets, which made us jump. But when the clouds and mists began to envelop us, flying low as we



were, then my pilot was a little worried. When we reached Bamrauli it was raining hard, and a mist covered the aerodrome, so that it was difficult to distinguish it.

I had wanted to start early in the morning from Jamshedpur and reach Lucknow in the forenoon at the latest. But reports of thunderstorms and high winds were not encouraging, and my pilot, an expert at his job, was in no mood to take risks. We postponed our departure till a better report came, and eventually took off a little before noon. We flew fast with a following wind pushing us on. Towns and villages passed us, and the river Sone and the Ganga with Benares in the distance. It had been good flying so far, with only occasional bumps. As we approached Allahabad black and threatening clouds came nearer and nearer, and it was obvious that we were going into a big thunderstorm. Out of these clouds suddenly appeared an Imperial Airways flying-boat a little to our right and sailed majestically by. It was big enough to go through that storm, but our small plane was beginning to be buffeted.

Our pilot decided in favour of discretion and turned back to Benares. We landed there on the military aerodrome. After some waiting, which we utilized in filling up with petrol, we decided to venture up again. But the ground did not have much of a runway, and our plane felt heavy. So I dropped my luggage in Benares and parted with Upadhyaya, who had been accompanying me. Thus lightened, we flew easily enough and headed for Allahabad. As we approached the city the low-lying clouds enveloped us and rain lessened the visibility still further. We crossed the Ganga, and my eyes spotted Anand Bhawan and Swaraj Bhawan and many other familiar landmarks. Even the Alfred Park looked singularly attractive from above, perhaps because of the monsoon. We flew low right over the High Court, and I could see large numbers of the men of the Law crowding in the verandahs to see this impertinent little plane rush by.

And so to Bamrauli in just half an hour from Benares.

There was little chance of our going further by air that day, and I bade good-bye to our pilot and the gallant little plane that had brought us, and decided, regretfully, to continue my journey to Lucknow by the slow-moving railway train.

The big air liners usually fly high. The K.L.M. has taken me 18,000 feet above sea-level and flown over the snow-covered Alps. We flew so high even over the Dead Sea in Palestine that frost covered our window-panes. Once I had a curious experience in an Imperial Airways liner flying over the deserts of Sind. This was my first experience of long-distance flying. It was early morning, and the dawn was stealing over the earth. I saw stretched out far below me a magnificent snowfield. There it was stretching as far as I could see on every side of us, a glistening uniform mass of snow. I rubbed my eyes in amazement and looked again. There could be no mistaking it. But it was absurd to have snow in Sind. Was it cotton-wool, then, masses of it strewn on the ground? That was an equally fantastic notion. We were flying high and the sky above us was clear and blue. Below us also for some thousands of feet there was no cloud, and then there was this white, shining mass apparently covering the ground. The mystery was solved soon enough when we came down about five thousand feet and lost ourselves in the clouds. We emerged out of them and under them, and found we were still flying nearly ten thousand feet above the ground.

Flying high one loses touch with the earth. It seems distant, and very few details are visible. A big river may be a silver streak, but even a mountain, unless it is very high, is hardly distinguishable from the low-lying land. There is little sense of speed as one gets in a car or a railway train with objects rushing past us. But if a plane flies really low, under a hundred feet, then the earth simply rushes up and away.

*August 5, 1939.*

## *A Holiday in a Railway Train*

Most people dread long journeys in a railway train, and even those fortunate beings who travel first or in air-conditioned carriages complain woefully of the discomforts they have to face. The prospect of having to journey in a second-class compartment is too painful for them to contemplate, and an intermediate or third class is to them a chamber of horrors full of the sufferings of the damned, or the unhappy poor who are so far removed from them and perhaps considered too insensitive and coarse-bodied to experience those finer feelings reserved for the upper classes of humanity. It is true that the difference between the air-conditioned carriage and the third-class in this country is vast; they signify two worlds utterly different from each other; they represent the unbridgeable gulf that separates different classes of human beings. It is true also that the treatment accorded to the third-class passenger in India, who brings the revenue to the railways, is a continuing scandal.

I have no experience whatever of travelling in the air-conditioned coaches on the Indian railways. They are, like so many other things, beyond my reach, and I can only gaze from the outside at the soft comfort that they contain. First-class travel also is a dim memory of the past with me and for many years I have not ventured into a first-class compartment in India. My travelling is done third, or intermediate, or sometimes second.

Often some of my friends, who are among the fortunate and used to comfortable living, are upset at my travelling about in the lower classes and imagine that I suffer untold agonies. They worry themselves needlessly, for these long journeys are restful to me and bring me relief. Though not perhaps coarse of body, I am tough and can adapt

myself without much difficulty even to the third class, unless this is very crowded. I sleep and rest and read and forget for a while my daily routine of work and meeting people. Fortunately I can always sleep when I want to and have never been a victim of insomnia. I do not have to woo sleep; I treat it with indifference and the fickle jade comes to me and overpowers me. And so I look forward to long journeys.

Two days ago I left Bombay after five strenuous days there and I was tired and wanted long rest and sleep. I had to come to Lucknow and I chose a slow train which took thirty-four hours, two full nights and a day in between. The prospect of this long journey with no engagements and interviews, with full freedom to sleep as long as I liked and read books, delighted me. I ventured to travel second to enjoy this rest fully.

At ten-thirty at night, as the train steamed out of Victoria terminus, I crept into my berth, and though I wanted to sleep, old habit made me take up a book. It was Stefan Zweig's "Letter from an Unknown Woman," and this tender and moving tale, written in beautiful prose, held me till near midnight. And then to sleep for ten hours continuously. There was nothing to be done the next day and my mind was, for the moment at least, free of care and the burden of having to get up at an appointed time did not oppress me.

I shaved and dressed and made myself comfortable with a bunch of books by my side. I took up first W. B. Curry's "The Case for Federal Union" and read a chapter or two. The book was interesting, the subject important today, and yet I wanted some lighter reading, and so I put it by for the present. But I felt that this book was probably more worth while than Streit's "Union Now," which had envisaged a federal union, leaving out India, China, and the Soviet Union.

I went on then to D. N. Pritt's "Light on Moscow," which appeared serially in the *Herald* some time back. I had read part of it then, but I wanted to read it as a whole and I found this well worth while. Memories

are short, and engulfed in war propaganda, we are apt to forget the astounding series of events that have led to the war in Europe, events that throw a searchlight on British policy and tell us the true nature of Mr. Chamberlain's Government. It is this Government that is carrying on the war; it is this Government that we have to deal with in India. So it is well that we remember that this is the most reactionary Government that Britain has had for generations past; that this Government has consistently encouraged Fascism and crushed democracy in Europe and elsewhere. If the British people choose to hang on to this Government, and if we judge them by it, is it our fault? If we see only imperialism behind its actions, before as well as after the outbreak of the war, are we in any way wrong?

And so to another book: H. G. Wells's collection of old essays—"Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water." Interesting and provocative to thought as all Wells's writings are, and yet just missing touch with the reality of the moment.

I took up yet another book, Georg Buchner's famous play, "Dantons Tod" or "Danton's Death," translated into English. Written over a hundred years ago, it took me back to the wild and stirring days of the French Revolution, and my mind rushed backwards and forwards from that Revolution to the mighty one on whose threshold we stand today. Buchner's words, written to his fiancée, stood up before me, of how he was impressed by the elemental and historic urge behind the Revolution. "I have been studying the history of the Revolution. I felt as if annihilated by the terrible fatalism of history. I see in men's nature a horrible uniformity, in human relations an unavoidable violence, exercised by all and by none. The individual only foam on the wave, greatness a mere accident, the mastery of genius a puppet play, a ridiculous struggle against an iron law, to understand which is the highest that can be achieved, to rule it impossible. . . . The 'must' is one of the curses with which man is baptized. The saying: it must needs be that offences come,

but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh—is horrible. What is it in us that lies, murders, steals?”

Is it so? Are we mere puppets of destiny, mere foam on the surface of the waters? A hundred years have gone by since Buchner wrote, a hundred years of vast human achievement and of man's conquest over the elements. And yet he has not brought under control the passions that consume him, or the elemental urges that move him as an individual or in the mass. And we go from tragedy to tragedy. And the tragedy of many an individual, as of Danton, is that he is left behind by the processes of history; he has no function to perform; no longer is he the agent of destiny. And so because his moment is passed, he cannot act; he can only protest and bemoan his lot, and weakness comes over him and consciousness of his approaching doom.

From the French Revolution back to the twentieth century; to the yesterdays that we have lived through; to the twenties so full of achievement for us in India, so fatuous in Europe; to the thirties with ever growing fear and consciousness of catastrophe coming; and now the step over the abyss. I took up another book and read a fascinating account of this period of which we have ourselves been witnesses, and which has influenced us so powerfully. This was Pierre van Passen's Autobiography called "Days of Our Years."

And thus to the end of the day and Jhansi, and, after a little more reading, to sleep again. The morning brought Lucknow and the brief holiday was over.

LUCKNOW,

*February 15, 1940.*

## Kashmir

## I

"Yea, in my mind these mountains rise,  
 Their perils dyed with evening's rose;  
 And still my ghost sits at my eyes  
 And thirsts for their untroubled snows."

NEARLY six years ago I quoted these lines from Walter de la Mare as I sat in prison writing the story of my life and thinking of my last visit to Kashmir. In prison or outside, Kashmir haunted me, and, though many years had passed since I had set eyes on its valleys and mountains, I carried the impress of them on the tablets of my mind. I yearned to visit them again, and struggled against this yearning. Was I to leave my work that took all my time, play truant to it, to satisfy the hunger of my eyes and the desire of my heart?

But days passed and months and years, and life is short, and a fear gripped me with this passing of time. Age may have its advantages, and the Chinese, above all other people, have praised them. It gives, or should give, stability and equilibrium to the mind, a sense of poise, an appearance of wisdom, even a keener appreciation of beauty in all its forms. But age is stiff and crabbed and unimpressible and reacts slowly to outside stimuli. It cannot be moulded easily; its emotional reactions are limited. It looks to comfort and security more than to the fine frenzy of enthusiasm. While it gives its sober and reasoned appreciation to the beauty of nature and art, it does not mirror this beauty in its eyes or feel it in its heart. It makes all the difference in the world whether one visits Italy—not Fascist Italy, but the Italy of song and music and beautiful art, of Leonardo and Raphael and Michael Angelo, of Dante and Petrarch—in one's youth

or in later years. Besides, what can age do to a mountain except sit and gaze in silent wonder?

So with the passing of time and the slow but irresistible coming of age over me, I began to grow afraid lest I might no longer be capable of experiencing that emotional reaction to the beauty of Kashmir when at last I went there again.

Friends in Kashmir invited me repeatedly to go there. Sheikh Abdullah pressed me again and again, and everyone who was of Kashmir reminded me that I, too, was a son of this noble land and owed a duty to it. I smiled at their insistence, for the urge within me was far greater than any that they could have placed before me. Last year I made up my mind to go and, if it was possible, to take Gandhiji with me. But at the last moment fate willed otherwise and I hurried by air to the other end of India and across the sea to Lanka, and on my return I flew to China.

Meanwhile events marched on with amazing speed. War came in Europe and began to spread its tentacles to India. New problems arose, new difficulties, and I noticed with alarm that I was being caught more and more in the clutches of these events. Would the possibility of my visiting Kashmir again recede into the far distance? My mind rebelled against this fate, and even as the future of France hung in the balance, I went to the Frontier Province and on from there to Kashmir.

I took the route via Abbottabad and the Jhelum Valley, a pleasant route with the panorama of the valley slowly unfolding in all its charm and beauty. But perhaps it would have been better if I had gone via Jammu and over the Pir Panjal. This is dull going most of the way, but as one crosses the mountain and goes through a long tunnel the sight that meets the eye is overpowering in its magic beauty. Out of the darkness one comes into the light, and there, far below, lies the vale of Kashmir, like some wonderland of our dreams, encircled by high mountains that guard it jealously from intrusion.

I did not go this way, and my approach was more sober



and the change was slower. But my mind was filled with the excitement of my return, and it pleased me to be welcomed everywhere as a brother and a comrade, who, in spite of long absence, was still of Kashmir and was coming back to his old homeland. With joy I saw the reality of the pictures in my mind which I had treasured for long years. I emerged from the mountains and the narrow valley, down which the Jhelum roared and tumbled in youthful abandon, and the vale itself spread out before me. There were the famous poplars, slim and graceful sentinels, beckoning a welcome to you. There was the lordly chenar in all its majesty, with centuries of growth behind it. And there were the beautiful women and bonny children of Kashmir working in the fields.

We approached Srinagar, and there was cordial welcome and friendly faces everywhere. Up the river we went in a stately barge with numerous *shikaras* following, and the riverside steps and houses filled with cheering men and women and children. I was moved, as I have seldom been, by this affection that was showered upon me, and I became tongue-tied by the emotions that surged within me as the panorama of Srinagar passed by. Hari Parvat was in the background, and Shankaracharya or Takht-e-Suleiman loomed in the distance. I was in Kashmir.

I spent twelve days in Kashmir, and during this brief period we went some way up the Amarnath Valley and also up the Liddar Valley to the Kolahoi glacier. We visited the ancient temple at Martand and sat under the venerable chenar trees of Brijbehara, which had grown and spread during four hundred years of human history. We loitered in the Moghal gardens and lived for a while in their scented past. We drank the delightful water of Chasme Shahi and swam about in the Dal Lake. We saw the lovely handiwork of the gifted artisans of Kashmir. We attended numerous public functions, delivered speeches, and met people of all kinds.

I tried to give my mind to the activity of the moment, and perhaps, in a measure, succeeded. But my mind was largely elsewhere, and I went through my engagements

and the day's programme, and functioned on the public stage, like one who is absorbed in some other undertaking or is on a secret errand whose object he cannot disclose. The loveliness of the land enthralled me and cast an enchantment all about me. I wandered about like one possessed and drunk with beauty, and the intoxication of it filled my mind.

Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire, such was Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of river and valley and lake and graceful trees. And then another aspect of this magic beauty would come to view, a masculine one, of hard mountains and precipices, and snow-capped peaks and glaciers, and cruel and fierce torrents rushing down to the valleys below. It had a hundred faces and innumerable aspects, ever-changing, sometimes smiling, sometimes sad and full of sorrow. The mist would creep up from the Dal Lake and, like a transparent veil, give glimpses of what was behind. The clouds would throw out their arms to embrace a mountain-top, or creep down stealthily like children at play. I watched this ever-changing spectacle, and sometimes the sheer loveliness of it was overpowering and I felt almost faint. As I gazed at it, it seemed to me dream-like and unreal, like the hopes and desires that fill us and so seldom find fulfilment. It was like the face of the beloved that one sees in a dream and that fades away on awakening.

## II

When I went to China I marvelled at the artistry and exquisite craftsmanship of the Chinese people. India has long been famous for her artisans and craftsmen, but China seemed to me to be definitely superior in this respect. In Kashmir I had the feeling that here was something which could equal China. How beautiful are the articles made by the deft fingers of Kashmir's workers! To look at them was a pleasure, to handle them a delight.

Kashmir has been famous for its shawls for hundreds

of years. Yet in spite of this fame the making of these fine shawls languished and shoddy articles from Western factories took their place. That was the fate also of other fine hand-made articles of Kashmir. A limited tourist trade survived, but, generally speaking, the rich people of India preferred foreign goods to these things of beauty and artistic worth that Kashmir produced.

The National Movement in India, which took a new turn twenty years ago, had far-reaching results in many fields. Our insistence on hand-made products gave a new life to these products, and many a dying industry was revived. Kashmir was affected by this renaissance also, and gradually a new market for Kashmir goods sprung up in India. The All-India Spinners' Association played a leading part in this, and their Kashmir branch became the supplier of hundreds of sale-depots all over India. Yet the pace has been slow and might well have been quicker. This growth of handicrafts has brought work to many of the skilled unemployed, and points the way to prosperity.

But wages are low, and the contrast between the loveliness of the work done and the wages paid for this skill shames one. Kashmir, even more than the rest of India, is a land of contrasts. In this land, overladen with natural beauty and rich nature's gifts, stark poverty reigns and humanity is continually struggling for the barest of subsistences. The men and women of Kashmir are good to look at and pleasant to talk to. They are intelligent and clever with their hands. They have a rich and lovely country to live in. Why, then, should they be so terribly poor?

Again and again, as I was wrapped in pleasurable contemplation of Kashmir's beauty, I came back to hard earth with a shock when I saw this appalling poverty. Why should these people remain so miserably poor, I wondered, when nature had so abundantly endowed them? I do not know what the mineral or other natural resources of Kashmir are. I should imagine that the country is rich in them, and in any event a very full survey is one of the first steps that should be taken.

But even if no additional wealth was disclosed, the existing resources are enough to raise the standard of living considerably. Provided, of course, that they are properly co-ordinated and utilized on a planned and ordered basis. Cheap power is available and many small and big industries can be started. The field for the development of cottage industries and handicrafts is enormous. Then there is the tourist traffic, for which Kashmir is an ideal country. It can well become the playground, not only of India, but of Asia.

I do not personally fancy a country depending largely on tourist traffic. Such dependence is not good, and external causes may put a sudden end to it. But there is no reason why tourist traffic should not be developed as a part of a general scheme of all-round development. There is at present a Tourist Department, but its activities appear to be strictly limited and of the flat, official variety. I could not even obtain simple guide-books of Kashmir. Some of the descriptive accounts of the routes to and in Kashmir were so badly got up and printed that it was painful to refer to them. Even now, possibly the only decent guides are those written a generation or more ago. The first job that the Tourist Department should take up is to produce cheap and simple guides and folders with full information about the various routes up or across valleys.

Kashmir is an ideal place for youth hostels such as have grown up all over Europe and America. The whole country should be dotted with these hostels, and young people, boys and girls, should be encouraged to tramp over the hills and valleys and thus gain an intimate knowledge of the country.

I have mentioned cheap power. On my way up the Jhelum Valley, I visited again the hydro-electric power works. More than twenty years had made no difference to them or increased their utility; much of the power produced was being wasted, and much that could be produced was not produced at all. These works symbolized for me the static condition of Kashmir.

For Kashmir has been singularly static. Srinagar city may have grown and there are more houses on the outskirts. New boulevards skirt the Dal Lake, and the Maharaja likes to build palaces. His new palace, a vast affair, looked chaste and attractive, unlike the usual palaces of ruling chiefs in florid and exuberant styles. But a few boulevards and palaces do not make much difference to a city or a country, and, apart from these minor changes, the aspect of Srinagar was not greatly changed.

I wish that some great architect would take charge of the planning and rebuilding of Srinagar. The river fronts should be attacked first of all, the slums and dilapidated houses should be removed and airy dwellings and avenues take their place, a proper drainage system introduced, and so much else done to convert Srinagar into a fairy city of dream-like beauty, through which runs the Vitastha and the many canals sluggishly wind their way with the *shikaras* plying on them and the houseboats clinging to the banks. This is no fancy picture, for fairyland lies all round it; the magic is there already, but unfortunately human hands and human folly have tried to cover it here and there. Still it peeps out through slum and dirt.

But if this planning is to be resorted to, the building of palaces for a few rich must be held up and the resources of the State applied to this great work. There can be no planning with great vested interests consuming a great part of the wealth of the State and obstructing public progress. Nor can there be any such real planning when the standard of the people is very low, and poverty consumes them, and evil customs bar the way. We shall have to think differently and act rapidly if we are to achieve substantial results in our generation.

While Kashmir appeared so static and unchanging, one change pleased me greatly. This was the introduction of Basic Education in the State schools. I visited some of these schools and saw the happy children with bright and intelligent faces at work and at play. It is for this generation that we struggle and build, and it is well that some at least among them are learning rightly the business of

life and developing in their early years an integrated personality and adaptable minds and hands. I hope that Basic Education will spread throughout Kashmir and bring into its fold every little boy and little girl.

### III

I have written that Kashmir had a static appearance. Yet there was one major and fundamental change, which I sensed as soon as I set foot on its soil. I had heard of political awakening there, of the growth of a big organization, often of troubles and conflicts, of good happenings and bad. I had taken interest in all this and read about it, and sometimes discussed it with those most concerned. So I expected to see this change.

I have enough experience of mass movements, some sense of the crowd, a way of judging rapidly and almost intuitively the strength and depth of popular movements. A big crowd may welcome me, and yet to me it might convey no sense of power or of feelings deeply stirred; it might even have an air of artificiality, of groups of sight-seers out on a holiday, to have a glimpse of a well-known personality. A much smaller crowd might produce a deeper impression on me and give me a glimpse of strange currents and powerful forces beneath the surface of the life of the people.

I try to be receptive, to tune myself to the inner mood of the mass, so that I can understand it and react to it. That understanding and reaction are necessary before I can try to impose my thought and will on them. So my mental temperature varies with the environment, and for a while I allow it full rein, before I pull myself up lest I go astray. Sometimes a contrary reaction is produced in me by some untoward event, which affects me far more then because of my receptive mood.

With this experience behind me, I set myself out to understand the inner significance of the popular movement in Kashmir. People came to me to speak in praise of it or to criticize it, and I listened to them patiently and some-

times learned something from them. But my rod of measurement cared little for the incidents that seem to excite some people. I was not out to measure individuals, though to some extent that also had to be done, but to grasp what the mass of the people felt, what moved them, what they aimed at, though vaguely and semi-consciously, what strength they had developed, what capacity for united action.

I sensed that Kashmir was astir and the masses were on the move. That had been a common experience to me in many parts of India during the past twenty years. But it was an uncommon experience on that scale in an Indian State. There could be no doubt of the widespread awakening among the people, and of a growing feeling of self-reliance and strength. In this respect, in some ways, Kashmir seemed to be in advance. It was difficult to judge of the discipline and self-imposed restraint that accompanied this new-found strength. I think there was a measure of discipline also, though perhaps not so much as in the more politically developed parts of India. Perhaps, also, that idealism, which has been so marked a feature of the Indian Nationalist Movement, was not present to the same degree. The political awakening had not yet brought in its train that hard experience and close thinking which we had had elsewhere. That was natural, for the Kashmir movement was comparatively young, though even in its few years of life it had gone through many an experience which had moulded it and given it shape.

Considering the brief life of this movement, I was surprised to find how vital and widespread it was, although I saw it during a period of quiescence. It had changed the face of Kashmir during these few years, and, if properly led and controlled, it held promise of great good for the country.

In its leadership it was fortunate, for Sheikh Mohamad Abdullah was a real leader of the people, beloved of them, and with vision which looked ahead and did not lose itself in the petty conflicts of the moment. He was the founder

and initiator of the movement. At first it began on communal lines and became entangled in many unfortunate occurrences. But Sheikh Abdullah pulled it out of these ruts and had the courage and statesmanship to steer it out of the narrow waters of communalism into the broad sea of nationalism. Dangers and difficulties still remain—which one of us is free from them?—and he will have to steer carefully and to overcome them.

It was a remarkable feat for any person to have brought about this political awakening among the poverty-stricken and helpless people of Kashmir. It was still more remarkable to check it from overflowing into wrong channels, and to guide it with a strong hand along the right path. The difficulties were increased during the past three years by the growth of the communal spirit all over India, which inevitably had some effect on Kashmir also. Sheikh Abdullah performed these remarkable feats and rightly earned the title of "Sher-e-Kashmir," by which he is popularly known. He did not, and he could not, get rid of all the ills—communal or other—that a popular movement suffers from. But the measure of his considerable success is obvious enough in Kashmir today.

This movement has so far affected Kashmir proper far more than Jammu Province, which is partly allied to and affected by Punjab politics. In a sense Kashmir is a definite historical, cultural, and linguistic unit, and it was natural for a popular movement to spread there first without producing the same effect on Jammu. Kashmir proper has an overwhelmingly big proportion of Muslims in the population; there are about 95 per cent. of them. If Jammu Province is included, the Muslim proportion is reduced to about 75 per cent., which is substantial enough.

The Hindus of Kashmir proper, chiefly Kashmiri Pandits, though only about 5 per cent., are an essential and integral part of the country, and many of their families have played a prominent part in Kashmir's history for a thousand years or more. Even today they play a significant part in the State services and administration. Essentially these Kashmiri Pandits are the middle-class intelligentsia.



Intellectually they compare very favourably with any similar group in India. They do well in examinations and in the professions. A handful of them, who migrated south to other parts of Northern India during the last two hundred years or so, have played an important part in public life and in the professions and services in India, out of all proportion to their small numbers.

A popular mass movement, especially in Kashmir proper with its 95 per cent. Muslim population, was bound to be predominantly Muslim. Otherwise it would not be popular and would not affect the masses. It was also natural that the Hindu minority of 5 per cent. should not view it with favour, both from the communal and the middle-class point of view. Certain unfortunate occurrences and communal riots in 1931 added to these fears and suspicions. The Kashmiri Pandits, though small in number, impelled by a desire for self-protection, started organizing themselves as a communal group. Since then the situation has certainly improved, and, though fear and suspicion remain to some extent, the feeling of hostility is much less. This has been brought about by a keener appreciation of the realities of the situation as well as by Sheikh Abdullah's consistent policy to give the popular movement a national basis. A number of Kashmiri Pandits, especially some bright young men, have definitely joined the National Conference. The great majority, however, hold formally aloof, though in no hostile sense, and though a definite attempt to establish friendly relations is visible. I am leaving out of consideration the activities or reactions of individuals, who do not make much difference when considering the various currents and group forces at play.

#### IV

I imagine, though I have no definite data for this, that the development of the Congress movement and of the Khudai Khidmatgars<sup>1</sup> in the North-West Frontier Province had considerable influence on Kashmir during the last ten

<sup>1</sup> This is the Congress Volunteer Organization in the N.W.F.P.

years. The two are adjoining territories and have many contacts, and yet the Afghans and the Kashmiris differ from each other markedly. It is surprising that such close neighbours, who have lived next to each other for nearly a thousand years, should differ so much physically, intellectually, culturally, and emotionally. But in spite of these differences there is much in common, and the political upheaval in the Frontier Province was bound to produce its reactions in Kashmir.

I was exceedingly fortunate, therefore, in having as my companion during the Kashmir visit Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who has been the cause of this political awakening in the Frontier and who symbolizes it so much in his own person. It was obvious that he was a favourite of the Kashmiris, as he has become of people in all parts of India. "Fakhr-e-Afghan," or Badshah Khan, as he is popularly and affectionately known, was a delightful companion, though a hard taskmaster occasionally.

Both the Frontier Province and Kashmir adjoin the Punjab. Both complain that it is the communal spirit of the Punjab that creeps in and creates friction and trouble, otherwise there would be communal harmony. This complaint is especially bitter against certain sections of the Punjab press, both Muslim and Hindu owned, which spread out into these adjoining territories, which have no proper newspapers of their own. As a reaction against this Press invasion from the Punjab, there is a tendency for Kashmir and the Frontier Province to hold together. These contacts are likely to grow, and I think they should grow, to the mutual advantage of both.

I addressed many great gatherings in Srinagar and outside, but I had gone to Kashmir more to learn and to understand than to teach. Two of the Srinagar meetings I addressed were held under the auspices of the National Conference, whose guest I was. Two others in Srinagar were held under the auspices of the Yuvak Sabha, the organization of the Kashmiri Pandits, and one of these meetings, held at my particular request, was specially meant for the Panditanis.

I spoke at some length on the minority problem at the Yuvak Sabha meeting. I need not repeat what I said then, for it has been said often enough, but I warned them not to fall into the trap into which minorities so easily fall. I spoke frankly and freely, for, having been born in a Kashmiri Pandit family, I could take liberties with my own people.

While every individual and group deserved equal protection and help from the State, the idea of special safeguards for a minority group was full of peril for that group. For such safeguards led to dependence on extraneous help and weakened the group's spirit of self-reliance; the special privileges amounted, in effect, to little, but they created walls of prejudice which injured the group, and barriers which prevented growth.

Above all, they led to a narrowness of outlook and to isolation from national activities and the life-giving currents which moved the masses. At any time such safeguards and special protection were dangerous gifts to ask for or to receive. In the dynamic world of today, with vast revolutionary changes taking place before our eyes, it was folly of the first order to imagine that such safeguards or privileges could hold and protect. Only strength of mind and purpose and unity of action could give some protection.

Safeguards and special protection might, perhaps, be needed by a group which was very backward educationally and economically. They were in the nature of crutches for the lame and the halt. Why should those who were keen of mind and swift of foot require them? No one had ever accused the Kashmiri Pandits of lack of intelligence or of ability to adapt themselves to a changing environment. All that they should demand was a free and open field for talent and ability.

I pointed out to them what an outstanding part Kashmiris, both Hindu and Muslim, had played in the whole of India, although they were small in numbers. In public life, professions, services, in the States, in cultural activities, they had done remarkably well, without the least

help or protection from anybody. Many of the Muslim Kashmiris are not known as Kashmiris, and so people do not appreciate this fact. But, as a matter of fact, Muslim Kashmiris are prominent in many walks of life in India. One famous name stands out above all others—that of the poet, Sir Mohamad Iqbal, who was a Sapru.

Kashmiri Pandits are more recognized in India as Kashmiris. They have done astonishingly well, although in numbers they are probably under five thousand outside Kashmir. I told my audience, with becoming modesty, that during the fifty-five years of the life of the Indian National Congress, for seven years Kashmiri Pandits had been presidents—a remarkable record for a handful of people who had migrated from Kashmir to the plains below.

The whole question of minorities and majorities in India is tied up with foreign and third-party rule. Eliminate that rule, and the basic aspect of this question changes. That process of elimination is going on now.

So I spoke and said much else, laying especial stress on the need for every group, if it was to count in the future, to throw its weight on the side of the masses, to join the national movement and draw strength and sustenance from it. No group or community which was continually shouting about itself, and demanding this and that special privilege or protection, would make much difference to the future that was being shaped. That future would be shaped without it.

The women's meeting was an extraordinary sight. It rained heavily throughout, and the meeting was held in the open. I had imagined that the meeting would be abandoned. But for hours before the time of the meeting thousands of women gathered and stood in the pouring rain, and when Badshah Khan and I got there these girls and young women and old women were standing in ankle-deep mud and water. I am partial to the women of Kashmir. They are beautiful and full of charm, and there was many a bright and intelligent face there in that eager audience. I spoke to them of women's problems,

of what women had done and were doing in our national movement, of what their own kith and kin had done. And I urged them to rid themselves of the barriers of purdah, where such existed, and evil custom. The old orthodoxy must go, and the women of Kashmir, who were so eminently fitted in many ways, must play their part in the new India which we were all building together.

Wherever I went these women of Kashmir came to welcome me and to treat me as a brother or a son. It was a joy to meet them and to see the affection in their eyes. At Mutton, old Kashmiri ladies came to bless me and kiss me on the forehead, as a mother does to her son.

## V

We spent three and a half days in Srinagar and then sought a week's respite in the higher valleys. The vale itself and the gardens and country round about Srinagar could have held me indefinitely, but I hungered for the mountains and the narrow paths over precipices and the glaciers. I wanted to crowd as much of experience and sensations as I could during these few days, to fill the storehouse of my memory with a picture gallery which I could visit at leisure when I chose to. Srinagar was also, inevitably, too full of engagements and interviews and meetings; it repeated too much the old pattern of any life.

We went to Vernag and Achhbal, Anantnag or Islambad, and Mattan or Martand. The weather was unkind and the rain pursued us, but this did not prevent crowds gathering to welcome us, and often I had to say a few words to them in the pouring rain. I was tired and soaked to the skin when we reached Pahalgam in the evening. Pahalgam had grown since I had seen it last many years ago, and was something much more now than a mere camping-ground.

The next day we went, again to the accompaniment of rain, to Chandanwari on the Amarnath road. We went on horseback and on foot. Some of our party did not like this trip because of the rain, and returned tired, bored,

and exhausted. But I felt exhilarated by the beating of the rain on my face, and I loved to watch the rushing mountain torrent, whose winding course we followed. Leaving the party at Chandanwari, I went on some miles farther up with a friend. To my great regret, we could not go, for lack of time, to the lovely mountain lake of Shishnag, which was the next stage on the journey to the cave of Amarnath.

We came back from Chandanwari to Pahalgam the same day, and early the next morning our caravan proceeded to Liddarwat, following the course of the Liddar River. There was a midday halt at Aru, a lovely camping-ground, and then to Liddarwat and a well-earned rest. The weather had cleared and we scanned the skies hopefully and anxiously, for the next day we were to go to the Kolahoi glacier.

It turned out to be a fine, clear day, and it was well that it was so, for the going was bad, over rocks and boulders and across several small mountain streams. We reached the glacier at last and had our midday meal at its base. We then climbed up it for some distance, avoiding the pits and crevasses. We could not go far or stay long, as we had to hurry back to Liddarwat. But even that brief visit to the glacier was exhilarating and satisfied an old craving of mine.

The return journey was very tiring, and we reached our camp late in the evening. Badshah Khan was particularly exhausted, partly because he insisted on walking more than the others, who stuck to their hill ponies as much as they could. But whether he was tired or not, the pace of his walk did not slacken, his stride was no shorter, and those of us who tried to keep step with him panted in despair and were gradually left behind. To see his six feet two of Pathan manhood striding along those mountain paths was a sight which impressed itself very forcibly on me, and this is the picture of Khan Sahab that comes most often to my mind.

During this trip to the Kolahoi glacier there were a number of small accidents, and almost every member of

face, and there was little shyness or self-consciousness about them. In one shelter I was a little surprised when one of the ladies of the house came forward and, taking my hand, bade me welcome. She invited us to come inside and share their meal of bread and vegetable, which she had been cooking. That gesture of hers and her manner were so full of grace and self-assurance that I could well have imagined that some great lady was inviting me to her noble mansion.

## VI

Our visit to the Gujar shelters led to a minor crisis in our camp. Badshah Khan had a habit of filling his pockets with sweets and fruits to distribute these to the poor children we met on the road. His stock soon gave out when we met scores of children in the shelters. So he invited them to come to our camp.

On our return he sent for our camp cook and demanded that he produce all the foodstuffs he had, especially rice and flour and sugar. The cook was not very enthusiastic about this, and he returned with a small supply. Badshah Khan was not to be taken in, and he insisted on more. The cook pointed out that he had to feed a large party for another two days and he could not empty his limited stock. Our hosts also did not fancy the idea of having next to nothing left with us. But Badshah Khan insisted and said that anyway our party ate too much—which was perfectly true—and it would do us all a lot of good to have to put up with limited rations or even to starve for a day. There was no denying him, and the cook had to produce much more.

The next day we returned from Liddarwat to Pahalgam. For four or five days we had been completely cut off from news of the outside world, just when mighty decisions were being made on the battlefields of Northern France. We got some belated news at Pahalgam and found how very grave the situation was.

After spending the night at Pahalgam, we motored to

Srinagar. On the way we visited the ancient temple of Martand, and inside those massive and eloquent ruins local friends had made arrangements for sumptuous refreshments. Then to Anantnag, or Islamabad, and a big meeting, or rather two. Another gathering at Brijbehara under the spacious chenar trees. The platform where I stood was erected round the most ancient and majestic of these noble trees, with a girth of 55 feet at the base. It was about four hundred years old, we were told, and the course of this long span of history passed rapidly before me as I stood under its cool shelter. What strange happenings and revolutions and human follies it had witnessed during these centuries! While men had come and gone, living their brief lives of joy and sorrow, and generation had followed generation, this king of trees had stood, surveying the human scene, unmoved and unperturbed.

Back to Srinagar. Packing and leave-taking, a party at the Amar Singh Club, where I met many old friends, and a final public meeting to bid good-bye to the people of Srinagar.

The next morning we left Srinagar and sped towards Jammu. The road left the valley and mounted up the Pir Panjal. As we went higher, the panorama spread out before us and broader vistas came into view. We stood near the mouth of the tunnel and had a last look at the valley below. There lay the Vale of Kashmir, so famous in song and history, in its incomparable loveliness. A thin mist covered part of it, and a soft light toned down the hard edges of the picture. Above the clouds rose snow-capped peaks, and down from the valley below came the faint and distant sound of running water. We bade a silent farewell and, turning away with regret, entered the dark tunnel which took us to less favoured lands.

The night we spent at Kud on the Jammu road and met some friends there. The next morning to Jammu and the heat of the plains. Jammu gave us a great reception and an exhausting one, for the sun was hot in the daytime. Procession, interviews, engagements, and finally a great meeting at night. This meeting was held in an old dried-



up tank with steps all round, and this amphitheatre made a perfect setting for a big gathering. I was particularly pleased to see thousands of women at this meeting.

Badshah Khan left us that evening for Peshawar, but Sheikh Abdullah and some other friends from Kashmir accompanied us up to Lahore. The next morning we left by automobile for Lahore, but there was business still on the way. At Sialkot there was a huge gathering, also in an old dried-up tank as in Jammu, and at Wazirabad another big public meeting.

And so to Lahore and new problems and difficulties. Here I left Sheikh Abdullah and other Kashmir friends who had been such close companions during the past fourteen days. They had overwhelmed us with their hospitality, and this companionship and comradeship had made us know and understand each other a little better.

Twelve days in Kashmir, twelve days after three-and-twenty years! Yet one vital moment is worth more than years of stagnation and vegetation, and to spend twelve days in Kashmir was good fortune indeed. But Kashmir calls back, its pull is stronger than ever, it whispers its fairy magic to the ears, and its memory disturbs the mind. How can they who have fallen under its spell release themselves from this enchantment?

## *The Question of Language*

WE have had during recent months a revival of the old controversy between Hindu and Urdu, and high excitement has accompanied it and charges and counter-charges have been flung about. A subject eminently suited for calm and scholarly consideration and academic debate has been dragged down to the level of the market-place, and communal passions have centred round it. Inevitably, many of the champions who have entered the field of battle have little to do with scholarship or the love of a language for its own sake; they have been chiefly concerned with Government orders and court procedure. Those who love language as the embodiment of culture, of airy thought caught in the network of words and phrases, of ideas crystallized, of fine shades of meaning, of the music and rhythm that accompany it, of the fascinating history and associations of its words, of the picture of life in all its phases, those to whom a language is dear because of all this and more, wondered at this vulgar argument and kept away from it.

And yet we cannot keep away from it or ignore it, for the question of language is an important one for us. It is not important because of that cry of the ignorant that India is a babel of tongues with hundreds and hundreds of languages. India, as everyone who looks round him can see, has singularly few languages considering its vast size, and these are intimately allied to each other. India has also one dominant and widespread language which, with its variations, covers a vast area and numbers its votaries by the hundred million. Yet the problem remains and has to be faced.

It has to be faced for the moment because of its com-

munal and political implications. But that is a temporary matter and will pass. The real problem will remain: as to what policy we shall adopt in a scheme of general mass education and the cultural development of the people; how shall we promote the unity of India and yet preserve the rich diversity of our inheritance?

The question of language is ever one of great consequence for a people. Almost exactly three hundred years ago Milton, writing from Florence to a friend, emphasized this and said: "Nor is it to be considered of small consequence what language, pure or corrupt, a people has, or what is their customary degree of propriety in speaking it . . . for let the words of a country be in part unhandsome and offensive in themselves, in part debased by wear and wrongly uttered, and what do they declare, but, by no light indication, that the inhabitants of that country are an indolent, idly yawning race, with minds already long prepared for any amount of servility? On the other hand, we have never heard that any empire, any state, did not at least flourish in a middling degree as long as its own liking and care for its language lasted."

A living language is a throbbing, vital thing, ever changing, ever growing and mirroring the people who speak and write it. It has its roots in the masses, though its superstructure may represent the culture of a few. How, then, can we change it or shape it to our liking by resolutions or orders from above? And yet I find this widely prevalent notion that we can force a language to behave in a particular manner if we only will it so. It is true that under modern conditions, with mass education and mass propaganda through the Press, printed books, cinema, and the radio, a language can be varied much more rapidly than in past times. And yet that variation is but the mirror of the rapid changes taking place among the people who use it. If a language loses touch with the people, it loses its vitality and becomes an artificial, lifeless thing instead of the thing of life and strength and joy that it should be. Attempts to force the growth of a language

in a particular direction are likely to end in distorting it and crushing its spirit.

What should be the policy of the State in regard to language? The Congress has briefly but clearly and definitely stated this in the resolution on Fundamental Rights: "The culture, language, and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected." By this declaration the Congress is bound, and no minority or linguistic group can require a wider assurance. Further, the Congress has stated in its constitution, as well as in many resolutions, that, while the common language of the country should be Hindustani, the provincial languages should be dominant in their respective areas. A language cannot be imposed by resolution, and the Congress desires to develop a common language and carry on most of our work in the provincial languages would be pious wishes, ignored by the multitude, if they did not fit in with existing conditions and the needs of the situation. We have thus to see how far they so fit in.

Our great provincial languages are no dialects or vernaculars, as the ignorant sometimes call them. They are ancient languages with a rich inheritance, each spoken by many millions of persons, each tied up inextricably with the life and culture and ideas of the masses as well as of the upper classes. It is axiomatic that the masses can only grow educationally and culturally through the medium of their own language. Therefore it is inevitable that we lay stress on the provincial languages and carry on most of our work through them. The use of any other language will result in isolating the educated few from the masses and in retarding the growth of the people. Ever since the Congress took to the use of these provincial languages in carrying on its work we developed contacts with the masses rapidly and the strength and prestige of the Congress increased all over the country. The Congress message reached the most distant hamlet and the political con-

sciousness of the masses grew. Our system of education and public work must therefore be based on the provincial languages.

What are these languages? Hindustani, of course, with its principal aspects of Hindi and Urdu, and its various dialects. Then there are Bengali, Marathi, and Gujrati, sister languages of Hindi and nearly allied to it. In the South there are Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam. Besides these there are Oriya, Assamese, and Sindhi, and Punjabi and Pushtu in the North-West. These dozen languages cover the whole of India, and of these Hindustani has the widest range and also claims a certain all-India character.

Without infringing in the least on the domain of the provincial languages, we must have a common all-India medium of communication. Some people imagine that English might serve as such, and to some extent English has served as such for our upper classes and for all-India political purposes. But this is manifestly impossible if we think in terms of the masses. We cannot educate millions of people in a totally foreign tongue. English will inevitably remain an important language for us because of our past associations and because of its present importance in the world. It will be the principal medium for us to communicate with the outside world, though I hope it will not be the only medium for this purpose. I think we should cultivate other foreign languages also, such as French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese. But English cannot develop into an all-India language, known by millions.

The only possible all-India language is Hindustani. Already it is spoken by a hundred and twenty millions and partly understood by scores of millions of others. Even those who do not know it at all at present can learn it far more easily than a foreign language. There are many common words in all the languages of India, but what is far more important is the common cultural background of these languages, the similarity of ideas, and the many

linguistic affinities. This makes it relatively easy for an Indian to learn another Indian language.

What is Hindustani? Vaguely we say that this word includes both Hindi and Urdu, as spoken and as written in the two scripts, and we endeavour to strike a golden mean between the two, and call this idea of ours Hindustani. Is this just an idea with no reality for its basis, or is it something more?

There are many variations in Hindustani as spoken and written in various parts of Northern and Central India. Numerous dialects have arisen. But these are the inevitable consequences of want of education, and with mass education these dialects will tend to disappear and a certain standardization will set in.

There is the question of script. Devanagari and the Urdu script are utterly different from each other, and there is no possibility of either of them assimilating the other. Therefore wisely we have agreed that both should have full play. This will be an additional burden on those who have to learn both and it will encourage separatism to some extent. But we have to put up with these disadvantages, for any other course is not open to us. Both the scripts are part of the genius of our language, and around them have gathered not only literatures peculiar to the scripts, but also a wall of sentiment which is solid and irremovable. What the distant future will bring to us I do not know, but for the present both must remain.

The Latin script has been advocated as a solution of some of our linguistic difficulties. It is certainly more efficient than either Hindi or Urdu from the point of view of rapid work. In these days of the typewriter and duplicator and other mechanical devices the Latin script has great advantages over the Indian scripts, which cannot fully utilize these new devices. But in spite of these advantages I do not think there is the slightest chance of the Latin script replacing Devanagari or Urdu. There is the wall of sentiment, of course, strengthened even more by the fact that the Latin script is associated with our

alien rulers. But there are more solid grounds also for its rejection. The scripts are essential parts of our literatures; without them we would be largely cut off from our old inheritance.

It may be possible, however, to reform our scripts to some extent. We have at present, besides Hindi and Urdu, the Bengali, Marathi, and Gujrati scripts, each of these three being very nearly allied to Devanagari. It should be easily possible to have a common script for these four languages. This need not necessarily be Devanagari exactly as it is written today, but a slight variation of it. The development of a common script for Hindi, Bengali, Gujrati, and Marathi would be a definite gain and would bring the four languages much nearer to each other.

I do not know how far it is possible for the Dravidian languages of the South to fit in with a northern script, or to evolve a common script for themselves. Those who have studied this might enlighten us on this point.

The Urdu script has to remain as it is, though some slight simplification of it might be attempted. It might easily absorb the Sindhi script, which is very similar to it.

Thus we ought to have later on two scripts: the composite Devanagari-Bengali-Marathi-Gujrati and the Urdu, and also, if necessary, a southern script. No attempt must be made to suppress any one of these, unless there is a possibility by general agreement of those concerned to fit in the southern languages with a northern script, which is likely to be Hindi or a slight variation of it.

Let us consider Hindustani both as the mother tongue of the North and Central India and as an all-India language. The two aspects are different and must be dealt with separately.

Hindi and Urdu are the two main aspects of this language. Obviously they have the same basis, the same grammar, the same fund of ordinary words to draw upon. They are, in fact, the same basic language. And yet the present differences are considerable, and one is said to

draw its inspiration from Sanskrit and the other to some extent from Persian. To consider Hindi as the language of the Hindus and Urdu as that of the Muslims is absurd. Urdu, except for its script, is of the very soil of India and has no place outside India. It is even today the home language of large numbers of Hindus in the North.

The coming of Muslim rulers to India brought Persian as a Court language, and to the end of the Moghal period Persian continued to be so used. The language of the people in North and Central India continued to be Hindi throughout. Being a living language, it absorbed a number of Persian words; Gujrati and Marathi did likewise. But essentially Hindi remained Hindi. A highly Persianized form of Hindi developed round the imperial Courts, and this was called *Rekhta*. The word Urdu seems to have come into use during the Moghal period in the camps of the Moghals, but it appears to have been used almost synonymously with Hindi. It did not signify even a variation of Hindi. Right up to the Revolt of 1857, Urdu meant Hindi, except in regard to script. As is well known, some of the finest Hindi poets have been Muslims. Till this Revolt, and even for some time after, the usual term applied to the language was Hindi. This did not refer to the script, but to the language, the language of Hind. Muslims who wrote in the Urdu script usually called the language Hindi.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the words Hindi and Urdu began to signify something different from each other. This separatism grew. Probably it was a reflex of the rising national consciousness which first affected the Hindus, who began to lay stress on purer Hindi and the Devanagari script. Nationalism was for them inevitably at the beginning a form of Hindu nationalism. A little later the Muslims slowly developed their form of nationalism, which was Muslim nationalism, and they began to consider Urdu as their own particular preserve. Controversy centred round the scripts and their use in law courts and public offices. Thus the growing separatism in language and the conflict of scripts was



the outcome of the growth of political and national consciousness, which to begin with took a communal turn. As this nationalism became truly national, thinking in terms of India and not in those of a particular community, the desire to stop this separatist tendency in language grew with it, and intelligent people began to lay stress on the innumerable common features of Hindi and Urdu. There was talk of Hindustani not only as the language of Northern and Central India, but as the national language of the whole country. But still, unfortunately, communalism is strong enough in India, and so the separatist tendency persists along with the unifying tendency. This separatism in language is bound to disappear with the fuller development of nationalism. It is well to bear this in mind, for only then shall we understand what the root cause of the evil is. Scratch a separatist in language and you will invariably find that he is a communalist, and very often a political reactionary.

Although the terms Hindi and Urdu were interchangeably used for a long time during the Moghal period, Urdu was applied more to the language of the mixed camps of the Moghals. Round about the Court and camp many Persian words were current, and these crept into the language. As one moves southwards, away from the centres of Moghal Court life, Urdu merges into purer Hindi. Inevitably this influence of the Courts affected the towns far more than the rural areas, and the towns of the North far more than the towns of Central India.

And this leads us to the real difference between Urdu and Hindi today—Urdu is the language of the towns and Hindi the language of the villages. Hindi is, of course, spoken also in the towns, but Urdu is almost entirely an urban language. The problem of bringing Urdu and Hindi nearer to each other thus becomes the much vaster problem of bringing the town and the village nearer to each other. Every other way will be a superficial way without lasting effect. Languages change organically when the people who speak them change.

While Hindi and Urdu of ordinary household speech do not differ much from each other, the gulf between the literary languages has grown in recent years. In written literary productions it is formidable, and this has led some people to believe that some evil-minded persons are the cause of it. That is a foolish fancy, though undoubtedly there are individuals who take delight in increasing separatist tendencies. But living languages do not function in this way, nor can they be twisted much by a few individuals. We have to look deeper for the causes of this apparent divergence.

This divergence, though unfortunate in itself, is really a sign of healthy growth. Both Hindi and Urdu, after a long period of stagnation, have woken up and are pushing ahead. They are struggling to give expression to new ideas, and leaving the old ruts for new forms of literary expression. The vocabulary of each is poor as far as these new ideas are concerned, but each can draw on a rich source. This source is Sanskrit in the one case and Persian in the other; and hence, as soon as we leave the ordinary language of the home or the market-place and enter more abstract regions, the divergences grow. Literary societies, jealous of the purity of the language they use, carry this tendency to extreme limits, and then accuse each other of encouraging separatist tendencies. The beam in one's own eye is not seen, the mote in the other's eye is obvious enough.

The immediate result of all this has been to increase the gulf between Hindi and Urdu, and sometimes it almost appears that the two are destined to develop into separate languages. And yet this fear is unjustified and there is no reason for alarm. We must welcome the new life that is coursing through both Hindi and Urdu, even though it might lead to a temporary widening of the gulf. Hindi and Urdu are both at present inadequate for the proper expression of modern ideas, scientific, political, economic, commercial, and sometimes cultural, and they are both trying hard, and with success, to enrich themselves so as to meet the needs of a modern community. Why should

either be jealous of the other? We want our language to be as rich as possible, and this will not happen if we try to suppress either Hindi words or Urdu words because we feel that they do not fit in with our own particular backgrounds. We want both and we must accept both. We must realize that the growth of Hindi means the growth of Urdu and *vice versa*. The two will influence each other powerfully and the vocabulary and ideas of each will grow. But each must keep its doors and windows wide open for these words and ideas. Indeed, I would like Hindi and Urdu to welcome and absorb words and ideas from foreign languages and make them their own. It is absurd to coin new words from the Sanskrit or Persian for well-known and commonly used words in English or French or other foreign languages.

I have no doubt in my mind that Hindi and Urdu must come nearer to each other, and, though they may wear different garbs, will be essentially one language. The forces favouring this unification are too strong to be resisted by individuals. We have nationalism and the widespread desire to have a united India, and this must triumph. But stronger than this is the effect of rapid communications and transport and interchange of ideas and revolutionary changes going on in our political and social spheres. We cannot remain in our narrow grooves when the torrent of world change rushes past us. Education, when it spreads to the masses, will also inevitably produce standardisation and unification.

We must not, therefore, even look upon the separate development of Hindi and Urdu with suspicion. The enthusiast for Urdu should welcome the new spirit that is animating Hindi, and the lover of Hindi should equally appreciate the labours of those who seek to advance Urdu. They may work today along parallel lines somewhat separate from each other, but the two will coalesce. Nevertheless, though we tolerate willingly this existing separatism, we must help in the process of this unification. On what must this unity be based? Surely on the masses.

The masses must be the common factor between Hindi and Urdu. Most of our present troubles are due to highly artificial literary languages cut off from the masses. When writers write, who do they write for? Every writer must have, consciously or subconsciously, an audience in his mind, whom he is seeking to influence or convert to his viewpoint. Because of our vast illiteracy, that audience has unhappily been limited, but even so it is big enough and it will grow rapidly. I am no expert in this matter, but my own impression is that the average writer in Hindi or Urdu does not seek to take advantage of even the existing audience. He thinks much more of the literary coteries in which he moves, and writes for them in the language that they have come to appreciate. His voice and his word do not reach the much larger public, and, if they happen to reach this public, they are not understood. Is it surprising that Hindi and Urdu books have restricted sales? Even our newspapers in Hindi and Urdu barely tap the great reading public because they, too, generally use the language of the literary coteries.

Our writers, therefore, must think in terms of a mass audience and clientele and must deliberately seek to write for them. This will result automatically in the simplification of language and the stilted and flowery phrases and constructions, which are always signs of decadence in a language, will give place to words of strength and power. We have not yet fully recovered from the notion that culture and literary attainments are the products and accompaniments of courtly circles. If we think in this way we remain confined in narrow circles and can find no entrance to the hearts and minds of the masses. Culture today must have a wider mass basis, and language, which is one of the embodiments of that culture, must also have that basis.

This approach to the masses is not merely a question of simple words and phrases. It is equally a matter of ideas and of the inner content of those words and phrases. Language which is to make appeal to the masses must deal with the problems of those masses, with their joys

and sorrows, their hopes and aspirations. It must represent and mirror the life of the people as a whole and not that of a small group at the top. Then only will it have its roots in the soil and find sustenance from it.

This applies not only to Hindi and Urdu, but to all our Indian languages. I know that in all of them these ideas are finding utterance, and they are looking more and more towards the masses. This process must be accelerated, and our writers should deliberately aim at encouraging it.

It is also desirable, I think, for our languages to cultivate contacts with foreign literatures by means of translations of both the old classics and modern books. This will put us in touch with cultural and literary and social movements in other countries and will strengthen our own languages by the infusion of fresh ideas.

I imagine that probably Bengali, of all Indian languages, has gone furthest in developing contacts with the masses. Literary Bengali is not something apart from and far removed from the life of the people of Bengal. The genius of one man, Rabindra Nath Tagore, has bridged that gap between the cultured few and the masses, and today his beautiful songs and poems are heard even in the humblest hut. They have not only added to the wealth of Bengali literature, but enriched the life of the people of Bengal, and made of their language a powerful medium of the finest literary expression in the simplest terms. We cannot produce geniuses for the asking, but we can all learn from this and shape our course accordingly. In this connection I should also like to mention Gujrati. I am told that Gandhiji's simple and powerful language has had a great influence on modern Gujrati writing.

Let us now consider the other aspect of Hindustani as an all-India language, bearing in mind that it is no rival to the great provincial languages and there is no question of its encroaching on them. For the moment let us set aside the question of script, for both scripts must have full play. We cannot, of course, insist on everyone learning both scripts; that would be an intolerable burden for the

masses. The State should encourage both scripts and leave the persons concerned, or their parents, to choose between the two. Let us therefore consider the content of the language apart from its script.

Apart from its widespread range and dominance over India, Hindustani has certain other advantages as an all-India language. It is relatively easy to learn and its grammar is simple, except for the confusion of its genders. Can we simplify it still further?

We have a remarkably successful experiment to guide us, that of *Basic English*. A number of scholars, after many years' labour, have evolved a simplified form of English which is essentially English and indistinguishable from it, and yet which is astonishingly easy to learn. Grammar has almost disappeared except for a few simple rules, and the basic vocabulary has been reduced to about 850 words, excluding scientific, technical, and commercial terms. This whole vocabulary and grammar can be put down on one sheet of paper, and an intelligent person can learn it in two or three weeks. He will require practice, of course, in the use of the new language.

This experiment must not be confused with the many previous attempts to evolve a common world language—Volapuk, Esperanto, etc. All such languages, though simple, were highly artificial, and to learn them was an additional burden. The breath of life did not vitalize them and they could never become the languages of large numbers of people. Basic English, having all their advantages, does not suffer from this disadvantage, as it is a living language. Those who learn Basic English can not only have a simple and efficient means of communication with others, but they are already on the threshold of Standard English and can proceed further if they so wish.

My enthusiasm for Basic English might lead to the query, Why not have this as an all-India language? No, this cannot be, for the whole genius of this language is alien to our people and we would have to transplant them completely before we could impose this as an all-India lan-

guage. The practical difficulties would also be far greater than in the case of Hindustani, which is already so widely known all over India.

But I think that where we teach English as a foreign tongue—and we shall have to do this on an extensive scale—Basic English should be taught. Only those who wish to make a special study of the language should proceed to Standard English.

Can we evolve a *Basic Hindustani* after the fashion of Basic English? I think this is easily possible if our scholars will turn their minds to this end. The grammar should be as simple as possible, almost non-existent, and yet it must not do violence to the existing grammar of the language. The essential thing to be borne in mind is that while this basic language is complete in itself for the expression of all non-technical ideas, it is yet a stepping-stone to the further study of the language. The vocabulary might consist of a thousand words or so, not chosen at random because they are common words in the Indian languages, but because they form a complete whole and require no extraneous assistance for all ordinary speaking and writing.

Such a Basic Hindustani should be the all-India language, and with a little effort from the State it will spread with extreme rapidity all over the country and will help in bringing about that national unity which we all desire. It will bring Hindi and Urdu closer together and will also help in developing an all-India linguistic unity. On that solid and common foundation, even if variations grow or diversions occur, they will not lead to separatism. Those who wish to add to their knowledge of Hindustani can easily do so; those who are content with knowing Basic Hindustani only can yet take part in the larger life of the nation.

I have said previously that we should not object to the development of Hindi or Urdu separately. The new words that come in from either direction will enrich our inheritance, if they are vital, living words forced on us by circumstances or coming up from the masses. But the

formation of artificial words with no real sanction behind them has no such significance. To a large extent we have to form artificial words to meet the growing needs of our political, economic, scientific, and commercial life. In the formation of such words we should try to avoid duplication and separatism. We should be bold enough, I think, to lift bodily foreign technical words which have become current coin in many parts of the world, and to adopt them as Hindustani words. Indeed, I should like them to be adopted by all the Indian languages. This will make it easier for our people to read technical and scientific works in various languages, Indian and foreign. Any other course will lead to chaos and confusion in the mind of the student, who has to grapple with large numbers of technical terms, and who often has to read important books in other languages. An attempt to have a separate and distinct scientific vocabulary is to isolate and stultify our scientific growth and to put an intolerable burden on the teacher and taught alike. The public life and affairs of the world are already closely knit together and form a single whole. We should make it as easy as possible for our people to understand them and take part in them, and for foreigners to understand our public affairs.

Many foreign words can and should thus be taken in, but many technical words will have to be taken from our own language also. It is desirable that linguistic and technical experts should make a list of such words for common use. This will not only bring about uniformity and precision in matters where variety and vagueness are highly undesirable, but will also prevent the use of absurd phrases and expressions. Our journalist friends have a knack of translating literally foreign words and phrases without caring much for the meaning behind them, and then these loose words become current coin and produce confusion of thought. "Trade union" has been translated, sometimes as *vyapar sangh*,<sup>1</sup> a perfectly literal translation and yet as far removed from the truth as anything could be. But the choicest of the translations has been that of

<sup>1</sup> Retranslated, it would mean trade society or association.



“Imperial preference.” This was called by an enterprising journalist *shahi pasand*.

What should, then, be the policy of the State in regard to language? The State has to decide this question in regard to its courts and offices and education.

The official language of each province for affairs of State should be the language of the province. But everywhere Hindustani, as the all-India language, should be officially recognized, and documents in it accepted in both the Devanagari and Urdu scripts. In the Hindustani-speaking provinces the two scripts must be officially recognized, and it should be open to any person to address a court or an office in either script. The burden of supplying a copy in the other script should not be put upon him. The office or the court may occasionally use either script, but it would be absurd to enforce the rule that everything should be done in both scripts. The script that is mostly used in the area which the court or office serves will become the dominant script of that court or office. But official notifications should be issued in both scripts.

State education must be governed by the rule that it should be given in the language of the student. Thus in each linguistic area the language of that area should be the medium of instruction. But I would go a step further. Wherever there are a sufficient number of people belonging to a linguistic group, even though they might be living in a different linguistic area, they can demand from the State that special provision be made for teaching them in their own language. This would depend, of course, on such students being easily accessible from a convenient centre, and it would apply to primary education and, perhaps, if the number were large enough, to secondary education. Thus in Calcutta the medium of instruction would be Bengali. But there are large numbers of people there whose mother tongues are Hindustani, Tamil, Telugu, Gujrati, etc. Each of these groups can claim from the State that their primary schools should be run in their own languages. How far it will be possible to extend this

to secondary education I do not quite know. That would depend on the number of pupils concerned and other factors. These pupils would, of course, have to learn Bengali, the language of the linguistic area they live in. but this is likely to be done in the early secondary stage and after.

In the Hindustani-speaking provinces both Devanagari and Urdu scripts will be taught in the schools, the pupils or their parents choosing between them. In the primary stage only one script should be used, but the learning of the other script should be encouraged in the secondary stage.

In the non-Hindustani-speaking provinces Basic Hindustani should be taught in the secondary stage, the script being left to the choice of the person concerned.

University education should be in the language of the linguistic area, Hindustani (either script) and a foreign language being compulsory subjects. This compulsion need not apply to technical schools and higher technical courses. Provision for teaching foreign languages as well as our classical languages should be made in our secondary schools, but the subject should not be compulsory except for certain courses or for preparation for the university stage.

Among the provincial languages I have mentioned Pushtu and Punjabi. I think primary education should be given in these, but how far higher education can also be given through them is a doubtful matter requiring consideration, as they are not sufficiently advanced. Probably Hindustani will be the best medium for higher education in these areas.

I have, with great presumption, made various suggestions ranging from primary to university education. It will be easy to criticize what I have written and to point out the difficulties in the way, for I am no expert in education or in languages. But my very inexpertness is, perhaps, in my favour and I can consider the problem from a layman's point of view, with a detached outlook.

Also I should like to make it clear that I am not discussing in this essay the important and difficult problem of education as a whole. I am only dealing with the language side of it. When we consider the whole subject of education we have to think in terms of the State and the society we are aiming at; we have to train our people to that end; we have to decide what our citizens should be like and what their occupations should be; we have to fit in this education to their life and occupations; we have to produce harmony and equilibrium in their private and social and public life. We shall have to lay far greater stress on technical and scientific training if we are to take our place in the modern world. All this and more we shall have to do, and in doing so we shall have to upset the present incompetent and inefficient and top-heavy system of education and build anew on securer foundations.

But for the moment let us confine ourselves to the question of language and arrive at some general agreement in regard to it. I have written this essay with a view to invite consideration of this problem from a wider angle. If we agree to the general principles I have discussed, the application of them in practice will not be difficult. We are not in a position to apply most of these principles today, in spite of so-called provincial autonomy. We have no financial resources and our hands are tied up in a variety of ways. But to the extent we can put our principles into practice we should do so.

It may be that there is general agreement in regard to some of the suggestions I have made, and some disagreement in regard to others. Let us at least know where we agree; the points for discussion and debate will then be limited in number and we can consider them separately.

I might add that my frequent references to linguistic areas and the language of the province necessitate that provincial units should correspond with such language areas.

To facilitate this consideration I give below some of my main suggestions:

1. Our public work should be carried on and State education should be given in the language of each linguistic area. This language should be the dominant language in that area. These Indian languages to be recognized officially for this purpose are: Hindustani (both Hindi and Urdu), Bengali, Gujrati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya Assamese, Sindhi and, to some extent, Pushtu and Punjabi.

2. In the Hindustani-speaking area both Hindi and Urdu, with their scripts, should be officially recognized. Public notifications should be issued in both scripts. Either script might be used by a person in addressing a court or a public office, and he should not be called upon to supply a copy in another script or language.

3. The medium of State instruction in the Hindustani area being Hindustani, both scripts will be recognized and used. Each pupil or his parents will make a choice of script. Pupils will not be compelled to learn both scripts but may be encouraged to do so in the secondary stage.

4. Hindustani (both scripts) will be recognized as the all-India language. As such it will be open to any person throughout India to address a court or public office in Hindustani (either script) without any obligation to supply a copy in another script of language.

5. An attempt should be made to unify the Devanagari, Bengali, Gujrati and Marathi scripts and to produce a composite script suited to printing, typing and the use of modern mechanical devices.

6. The Sindhi script should be absorbed in the Urdu script, which should be simplified, to the extent that is possible, and suited to printing, typing, etc.

7. The possibility of approximating the southern scripts to Devanagari should be explored. If that is not considered feasible, then an attempt should be made to have a common script for the southern languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

8. It is not possible for us to think in terms of the Latin script for our language, for the present at least, in spite of various advantages which that script possesses.

We must thus have two scripts: the composite Devanagari Bengali—Gujrati—Marathi, and the Urdu—Sindhi; and, if necessary, a script for the southern languages, unless this can be approximated to the first.

9. The tendency for Hindi and Urdu in the Hindustani-speaking area to diverge and develop separately need not be viewed with alarm, nor should any obstruction be placed in the development of either. This is to some extent natural as new and more abstruse ideas come into the language. The development of either will enrich the language. There is bound to be an adjustment later on as world forces and nationalism press in this direction. Mass education will also bring a measure of standardization and uniformity.

10. We should lay stress on the language (Hindi, Urdu, as well as the other Indian languages) looking to the masses and speaking in terms of them. Writers should write for the masses in simple language understood by them, and they should deal with problems affecting the masses. Courtly and affected style and flowery phrases should be discouraged and a simple vigorous style developed. Apart from its other advantages, this will also lead to uniformity between Hindi and Urdu.

11. A *Basic Hindustani* should be evolved out of Hindustani on the lines of Basic English. This should be a simple language with very little grammar and a vocabulary of about a thousand words. It must be a complete language, good enough for all ordinary speech and writing, and yet within the framework of Hindustani, and a stepping stone for the further study of that language.

12. Apart from *Basic Hindustani*, we should fix upon scientific, technical, political and commercial words to be used in Hindustani (both Hindi and Urdu) as well as, if possible, in other Indian languages. Where necessary, these words should be taken from foreign languages and bodily adopted. Lists of other words from our own languages should be made, so that in all technical and such like matters we might have a precise and uniform vocabulary.

13. The policy governing State education should be that education is to be given in the language of the student. In each linguistic area education from the primary to the university stage will be given in the language of the province. Even within a linguistic area, if there are a sufficient number of students whose mother tongue is some other Indian language, they will be entitled to receive primary education in their mother tongue, provided they are easily accessible from a convenient centre. It may also be possible, if the number is large enough, to give them secondary education in the mother tongue as well. But all such students will have to take, as a compulsory subject, the language of the linguistic area they live in.

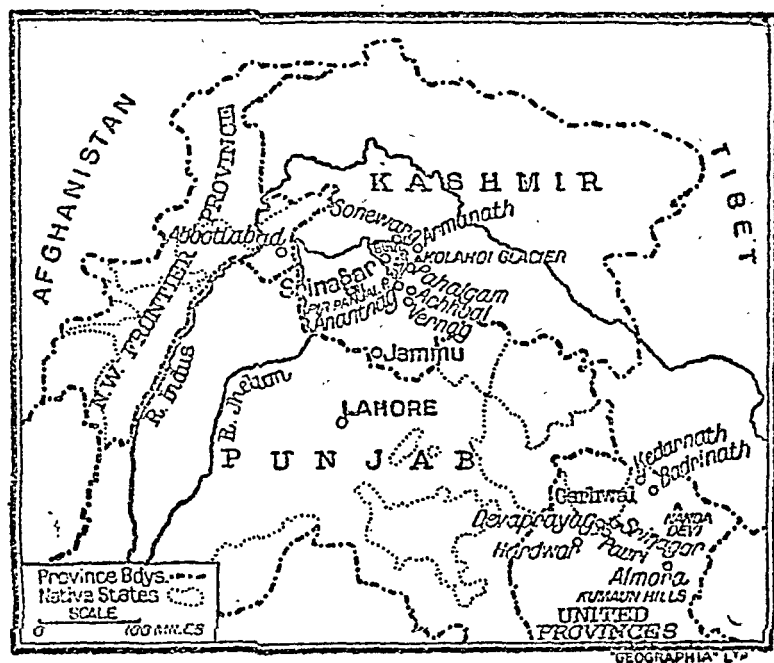
14. In the non-Hindustani-speaking area, Basic Hindustani should be taught in the secondary stage, the script being left to the choice of the person concerned.

15. The medium of instruction for university education will be the language of the linguistic area. Hindustani (either script) and a foreign language should be compulsory subjects. This compulsion of learning additional languages need not apply to higher technical courses, though a knowledge of languages is desirable even there.

16. Provision for teaching foreign languages, as well as our classical languages, should be made in our secondary schools, but the subjects should not be compulsory, except for certain special courses, or for preparation for the university stage.

17. Translations should be made of a considerable number of classical and modern works in foreign literatures into the Indian languages, so that our languages might develop contacts with the cultural, literary and social movements in other countries, and gain strength thereby.

*July 25, 1937.*



GEOGRAPHIA LTD

PART FOUR

*INDIA AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS*





# I

## *Food for Spain*

OUR elections<sup>1</sup> have absorbed our attention and most of us have thought of little else during the past few weeks. But now that the elections are over we must look around again and take cognizance of the world drama which pursues its tragic course and threatens world-wide catastrophe. We must do so primarily because the peril faces us as it faces others, because the same basic forces are in conflict elsewhere as in India, and the outcome of that conflict will affect us and mould our future. This conflict of world forces is most evident in Spain, where bloody and inhuman war has waged for over seven months, and where a brutal Fascism and militarism have sought to crush and annihilate Spanish democracy and reduce to dust and ashes the rights of the Spanish people. They have failed in their endeavour; for the Spanish people, hungry, ill-armed, lacking trained leadership, have yet put up such a magnificent fight that they have confounded their enemies, and shown afresh what the masses can do when they fight for their own freedom. The defence of Madrid for over three months has already taken its place in history, an inspiration to those who hunger and struggle for freedom. All the forces of reaction, the Fascist Powers, foreign legionaries, mercenaries, the farce of non-intervention, have struck hard at Madrid and Spain, but the spirit of that great city still stands high—indomitable, invincible, a bright flame—though ruins and death and starvation encompass it.

Whatsoever might be the ultimate fate of this epic struggle, the people of Spain have written history with their hearts' blood and heroic courage. Out of this precious material they have built up, in the midst of suffering and disaster, the great People's Front and the People's

<sup>1</sup> The first election to the Provincial Legislatures as constituted by the Government of India Act, 1935.

Militia which has held the gates of Madrid, for those gates have become the symbols of human liberty.

But the Spanish War is no longer a Spanish affair. The rival forces of the world fight for mastery there. Fascism fights anti-Fascism; militarism seeks to crush democracy. In this struggle British imperialism, with its so-called policy of non-intervention, has hindered and obstructed the Spanish people in their fight for freedom. But everywhere the lovers of freedom, the exploited of the world, have raised their voices in defence of the Spanish people, and have sent them such help as they could—ambulance corps, medical supplies, food supplies, and even volunteers. The International Brigade of Volunteers, drawn from all countries, has demonstrated magnificently the solidarity of the peoples of the world with the Spanish masses, and many of them have found a last resting-place with their Spanish comrades on Spanish soil which they defended with their lives.

What of us in India? We are not indifferent; we cannot be indifferent to courage and heroism in the cause of human freedom. We cannot forget that our own larger interests are involved, our own freedom for which we labour is at stake. For fascism and imperialism march hand in hand; they are blood brothers. The victory of either is the victory of both all over the world.

We have already expressed our deep sympathy and solidarity with the Spanish people in many ways. The National Congress has given eloquent expression to the Indian people's voice and feelings. But that is not enough. We must translate our sympathy into active and material help. We are poor and hungry folk, crushed under many burdens, dominated by an arrogant imperialism, and we struggle ourselves for freedom. But even in our poverty and misery we feel for our Spanish comrades and we must give them what aid we can, howsoever little this might be. We can help in sending them medical supplies and food. I trust it will be possible for us to arrange to send grain and other food supplies, and I appeal to those who deal in such good stuffs for their co-operation in this matter.

In London our countrymen have formed a Spain-India Committee with Syt V. K. Krishna Menon as chairman. I suggest that we might send money to them for the purchase and dispatch of medical supplies. I trust that contributions for this purpose will be forthcoming from all parts of the country. They will be received and acknowledged by Dr. R. M. Lohia, Foreign Department, All India Congress Committee, Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad. It will be for us to consider later in what other form or shape we can give our help to the Spanish people. But, apart from money, food is urgently needed and the call for it has come to me repeatedly.

ALLAHABAD,

*February 20, 1937.*

## 2

### *Peace and Empire*

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE CONFERENCE ON PEACE AND EMPIRE, ORGANIZED BY THE INDIA LEAGUE AND THE LONDON FEDERATION OF PEACE COUNCILS, FRIENDS HOUSE, LONDON, JULY 15 AND 16, 1938.

THIS conference has been held on the invitation of the India League and the London Federation of Peace Councils, to consider problems of peace and empire. Peace and Empire—a curious combination of words and ideas fundamentally opposed to each other, and yet I think it was a happy idea to put them together in this way, and to convene this conference. I do not suppose we can have peace in this world unless we do away with imperialist ideas. Therefore the essence of the problem of peace is the problem of empire.

So long as empires continue to flourish we may have periods when open war between States does not take place, but even then there is no peace, for conflict and preparation for war continue. There is conflict between rival imperialist States, between the dominating power and the subject people, and between classes. The very basis of the imperialist State is coercion of subject peoples and their exploitation; inevitably this is resented and attempts are made to overthrow this domination. On this basis no peace can be founded.

Now you and I in these days of fascist aggression often labour to do something to check the fascist menace, but not always to check the imperialist idea too. Many people seek to distinguish between the two. They do not think much of the imperialist idea, but consider that we might carry on with it for a time, although we cannot possibly do with fascism. I wish you would consider that in this conference, and try to find out how far we can distinguish between the two.

Perhaps because I come from a country which is under imperialism, I attach a great deal of importance to this question of empire. But apart from that, I feel that you cannot distinguish between the two conceptions of fascism and empire, and that fascism is indeed an intensified form of the same system which is imperialism. Therefore, if you seek to combat fascism you inevitably combat imperialism.

We have to face an extraordinarily difficult and complex situation when the embattled legions of fascist reaction threaten the world and are often encouraged and supported by other imperialist Governments. The reactionary forces of the world gather together and consolidate themselves, and in order to face them and check them we must also forget our petty differences and hold together.

We find fascism spreading and all manner of propaganda going on in imperialist States and in other countries. Perhaps you know that in South America today there is tremendous propaganda on the part of the Fascist States. We also find imperialist countries gradually drifting towards fascism, although sometimes they talk the language of democracy at home. They must do so because they cannot, owing to their imperialist foundation and background, ultimately resist fascism unless they give up that background.

There is a kind of consolidation of the forces of reaction. How are we to meet this? By consolidating the forces of progress against reaction. And if those who represent the forces of progress are inclined to split up and argue too much about minor matters, and thereby endanger the major issue, then they will be incapable of effectively resisting the fascist and imperialist menace. At any time it would be a matter for your consideration, that we hold together. But with all manner of difficulties facing us, it becomes an imperative necessity.

Now only a joint front, not a national joint front, but a world joint front, can achieve our purpose. And out of the horrors we have gone through, the most hopeful signs that

come to us are those which point towards the consolidation of the forces of progress and peace all over the world.

You will remember how in China there was internal conflict which weakened the nation. But when Japanese aggression came last year we beheld a people who had been bitterly fighting amongst themselves and destroying each other, who had built up enormous bitterness against each other, still being great enough to see the menace and to organize and unite themselves to fight it. Today, and for the last year, we have seen a united people in China fighting the invasion. In the same way, you will find in every country more or less successful attempts at unity growing up and you find all over the world these various national united groups looking for international solidarity.

In Europe and the West, where progressive groups have a longer history and different background, you have both advantages and disadvantages. But in Asia, where such groups have recently come into existence, the issue is often clouded by the nationalist issue, and one cannot think of it so easily in terms of internationalism, obviously because we have to think first of all in terms of national political feeling.

Even so, these modern developments, and especially what has happened in Abyssinia, in Spain and in China, have now forced people to think in terms of internationalism. We find a remarkable change in some of these countries of Asia, for even though we were engrossed in our struggles, we began to think more and more of the social struggles in other parts of the world, and to feel more and more that they affected us because they affected the entire world.

If we desire to resist the fascist menace effectively, we must equally oppose imperialism, or else we fail. The foreign policy of Britain is an example of this pitiful failure, for thinking in terms of imperialism it cannot resist fascist aggression or ally itself to the progressive forces of the world. And in so failing it is even helping in the disruption of its own empire which it seeks to pre-

serve. We have here a significant example of the basic kinship of imperialism with fascism and of the contradictions which imperialism itself presents.

If we are convinced, as I take it most of us are, that imperialism is akin to fascism, and both are enemies of peace, then we must seek to remove both, and not try to distinguish between the two. Therefore, we have to seek to root out imperialism itself, and seek a complete freedom for all the subject peoples of the world.

Now we are often told that instead of the imperialist conception, we should develop the conception of the commonwealth of nations. This is a phrase which appeals to one, because we all want a commonwealth of nations in this world. But if we think in terms of an empire gradually being transformed into a commonwealth, almost retaining its own structure economically and politically, then it seems to me that we are likely to delude ourselves very greatly. We cannot have a real commonwealth of nations born of empire. It must have different parents.

In the British commonwealth you have a number of countries which are almost independent. But let us not forget that in the British Empire there is a vast area and a vast population which is completely subject, and if you think that this subject population is gradually going to become an equal partner in that commonwealth, you will find enormous difficulties. You will find that if that process is somehow achieved in a political way, there will be many economic bonds which are inconsistent with a free commonwealth, which will not permit real freedom for those subject people, but will prevent them from changing their economic order if they wish, and will prevent them from solving their social problems.

Every one of us, I suppose, is in favour of a real commonwealth of nations. But why seek to limit it to a few countries and nations? That means that you are building up one group to oppose another group. In other words, you are building on the conception of empire and one empire comes into conflict with another empire. That may



reduce the danger of war within a group, but it increases the danger of war between groups.

Therefore, if we think in terms of a real commonwealth, we must necessarily abandon the ideas of imperialism, and build afresh on a new basis—a basis of complete freedom for all peoples. For the sake of such an order each nation should be prepared to shed, in common with others, some of the attributes of sovereignty. On this basis we can achieve collective security and establish peace.

Today in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, there are enormous populations which are subject, and until we get rid of that subjection, and imperialist ideas cease to exist, we will find this is a thorn in the side of peace.

The mandatory system in Africa and elsewhere is, I think, a very dangerous idea, because it covers a bad thing under a fair name. Essentially it is the imperialist system continuing in another guise. It is always dangerous to make one person the trustee of another, and allow him to profit by it. It may be that in some countries where you intend establishing complete freedom the same form of government may not be established as quickly in one place as in another, but you must start on the basis of complete freedom for every subject people, and then proceed in a practical way to help them if necessary. Although, personally, I rather distrust these offers of help, occasionally they may be necessary. But I do not think you will find a way out through this mandatory system, for it is founded on the same basis as imperialism.

I mentioned to you the growing solidarity of the various peoples, their feeling of international fellowship and comradeship because of this crisis. The growth of this international fellowship would be jeopardized by the exclusion of nations who want to be friendly. The people of India have for ages past been on very friendly terms with the people of China. There has never been any conflict between them. May I venture to correct our friend who conveyed the greetings of the people of China? He said that the Chinese came to India in the twelfth century. He was out by one thousand years; they came one thousand

years previously to India, and we have still records from their books of their visits. So we have had these long contacts, but apart from that, this recent crisis in China and the world has brought us much nearer to each other. We should like to hold together, we should like to work together for the peace and progress of the world. Why should we not be able to do so if we wish?

So if you look at the world as it is today, you may find countries who for some reason or another will not join a world order, but that is no reason why we should not start to build up that world order, and not limit it to a certain number of nations.

Therefore, a conception of a limited commonwealth must be combated and a conception of a larger commonwealth must grow up. Only then can we really achieve our aim of collective security. We want collective security, but I want to make my meaning quite clear. It is not the meaning that has been attached to it by Mr. Neville Chamberlain. My idea of collective security, to begin with, is not to retain a *status quo* which is based on injustice. We cannot have security that way. The essential corollary is the removal of imperialism and Fascism.

We find today an extraordinary state of affairs in the world. We find people who are apparently intelligent following contradictory policies, and increasing the general mess and muddle of the world. In this country, in Britain, we have seen an extraordinary foreign policy developed. Most of you are opposed to it. Nevertheless, it is strange that such a thing should happen, and to an outsider, it is very, very difficult to understand it. It is difficult to understand it from any point of view. We see today a Government in Britain which presumably is interested in maintaining the British Empire, acting in a way which militates against the interests of that empire.

I am not interested in maintaining that empire, but I am interested in ending that empire in a proper way.

The general public may perhaps approve of this policy because of its confusion in regard to imperialism and

fascism. This is a significant example of how imperialism, when driven into a corner, is bound to side with fascism. You cannot keep the two apart. When today these major issues confront the world, imperialists who have become more class conscious than ever seek the preservation of their class interests even at risk to the safety and preservation of their imperial interests in the future.

We come, therefore, to this, that we have to base any policy that we evolve on true foundations, and to root out the real evil. The problem of Central Europe, Czechoslovakia, Spain, China and many other problems, we realize, ought to be taken together and considered as a whole.

May I also remind you of another problem about which perhaps we do not think in this connection so often, but which is very much before us these days, the problem of Palestine? This is a peculiar problem and we are apt to think of it too much in terms of conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. May I remind you to begin with that right through 2,000 years there has never been any real conflict between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine? It is a problem which has recently arisen, since the war. It is fundamentally a problem created by British Imperialism in Palestine, and unless you keep that in mind, you will not solve it. Nor is it likely to be solved by British Imperialism.

It is true that this has become at the present moment rather a difficult problem because of the passions it has roused. What then is really the problem in Palestine?

The Jews are there, and every one of us has the greatest sympathy for the Jews, especially today, when they are being persecuted and hounded out of various countries of Europe. Although the Jews have erred in many ways, they have done a considerable service to the country since they came into Palestine. But you must remember that Palestine has been essentially an Arab country and this movement is basically a national struggle for the independence of the Arabs. It is not an Arab-Jew problem.

It is essentially a struggle for independence. It is not a religious problem. Perhaps you know that both Arab Muslims and Christians are completely united in this struggle. Perhaps you know that the old Jews, resident in Palestine before the war, have taken very little part in this struggle, because they have been closely associated with their Arab neighbours. It is quite understandable that the Arab people should resist any attempts to deprive them of their country. Any people would. An Irishman, Scotsman or Englishman would do the same. It is a question of not wanting to be pushed out of one's own country and the desire for freedom and independence.

So that the Arab people started this movement for the independence of their country, but British Imperialism played its hand so cleverly that the conflict became the conflict between Arabs and Jews, and the British Government cast itself in the rôle of umpire.

The problem of Palestine can only be solved in one way, and that is by the Arabs and Jews ignoring British imperialism and coming to an agreement with each other. Personally I think that there are many Arabs and Jews who desire to find a solution of the problem in this way. Unfortunately, recent events have created difficulties which have been played upon by imperialist elements, and it may be some time before the Arabs and Jews can come together, but it should be our business and duty to stress this viewpoint and to make it clear—(1) that you cannot solve this problem by trying to crush the Arab people; (2) that it will not be settled by British imperialism but by the two main parties coming together and agreeing to terms.

I do not propose to refer to the large numbers of countries which are subject countries, or countries which have other social troubles today, because almost every country has them. It may be that we can consider their problems later on, but I do think we must not forget the countries of Africa, because probably no people in the world have suffered so much, and have been exploited so much in the past as the people of Africa.

It may be that in the process of exploitation to some extent even my own countrymen have taken part. I am sorry for that. So far as we in India are concerned, the policy we wish to follow is this. We do not want anyone from India to go to any country and to function anywhere against the wishes of the people of that country, whether it is Burma, East Africa, or any other part of the world. I think the Indians in Africa have done a great deal of good work. Some of them have also derived a great deal of profit. I think Indians in Africa or elsewhere can be useful members of the community. But only on this basis do we welcome their remaining there, that the interests of the people of Africa are always placed first.

I suppose you realize that if India were free it would make a tremendous difference to the conception of empire throughout the world and all subject people would benefit thereby.

We think of India, China and other countries, but we are too often apt to forget Africa and the people of India want you to keep them in mind. After all, though the people of India would welcome the help and sympathy of all progressive people, they are today perhaps strong enough to fight their own battle, whilst that may not be true of some of the peoples of Africa. Therefore, the people of Africa deserve our special consideration.

Most of you will probably agree with the ideas I have put forward. Many people outside this hall may not agree with them. Many people may say that these are idealistic notions and have nothing to do with the modern world. I do not think there could be any more foolish notion than that. We shall only solve our problems today by proceeding in this way, and if you think we can solve them without raising these fundamental issues, you are highly mistaken.

Here is a small example of today in dealing with these problems. The example is of the Moors in Spanish Morocco. There was delay in dealing with their problem and the Fascist clique in Spain took advantage of this

and deceived these poor unfortunate Moors by making them all manner of false promises and enlisting them on its side to attack the very people who were likely to give freedom to them. That kind of thing will happen again and again if this issue is not faced properly.

We can hardly expect a subject country to show enthusiasm about the freedom of others when its own people remain subject.

Therefore, in India, we have made it perfectly clear and the Congress has declared that it can play no part in any Imperialist war. So long as India is subject, it is an absurdity to expect it to give its men and resources in a cause which might be in favour of strengthening an empire. The right way to deal with the situation is to root out imperialism, to give complete freedom to the subject peoples and then to approach them in a friendly manner, to come to terms with them. If the approach is made in that manner, they will be friendly. Otherwise, there will be constant hostility, trouble and conflict, and when the crisis develops and peril comes, all manner of complications will arise and it is not easy to say what will happen. Therefore, I beg all of you to remember and realize that we are not dealing with distant idealistic solutions today, but with current problems, and if we neglect them and evade them, we do so at our peril.

### 3

## *The Bombing of Open Towns*

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AT THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE CAMPAIGN ON THE BOMBARDMENT OF OPEN TOWNS AND THE RESTORATION OF PEACE, IN PARIS, ON JULY 23 AND 24, 1938.

I HAVE to convey to this great gathering the greetings and the assurances of full support in the cause of peace of the Indian National Congress representing the people of India. I do not speak on behalf of kings and queens or princes, but I do claim to speak for hundreds of millions of my countrymen. We have associated ourselves with this work of peace most willingly because of the vital urgency of the problem. Also because, in any event, our past background, and our civilization, would have urged us to do so. For the spirit of India for long ages past, like that of our great sister nation China, has been a spirit of peace. Even in our national struggle for independence we have always kept this ideal before us and adopted peaceful methods. So we gladly pledge ourselves to labour for peace.

Lord Cecil remarked yesterday that the only way ultimately to have peace is to abolish war. We entirely agree with this statement. To abolish war we have to remove the causes and roots of war. Because we have dealt with this problem superficially in the past, and not touched its roots, we have failed so far to achieve anything worth while, and the international situation has progressively deteriorated and brought death and untold suffering to millions. We shall fail again and perhaps perish in that failure if we continue to ignore those roots of war.

We see fascist aggression today driving the world to war, and we rightly condemn it and seek to combat it. But though fascism is a recent growth in the West, we have long known it under a different guise and a different name—imperialism. For generations past colonial countries have suffered under imperialism and suffer still. It is this imperial idea, functioning as Imperialism or Fascism, that is a potent cause of war, and until this goes there can be no true or enduring peace. There is no peace for a subject country at any time, for peace only comes with freedom. And so empires must go; they have had their day. We are not interested in emperors or kings, but in the peoples of the world, and the Indian National Congress stands for the people of India and their independence. Even today India is a powerful factor in favour of peace, and she can make a difference if a world crisis arises. She cannot be and does not propose to be ignored in the matter. A free India will be a tower of strength for peace, and soon we hope that India will be free.

Lord Cecil has pointed out the dangers of an intensive nationalism. May I say that I entirely agree with him, and, though I stand for Indian nationalism and Indian independence, I do so on a basis of true internationalism. We in India will gladly co-operate in a world order and even agree to give up a measure of national sovereignty, in common with others, in favour of a system of collective security. But that can come only when nations associate on a basis of peace and freedom.

There can be no world security founded on the subjection of colonial countries or on the continuance of imperialism. Freedom, like peace and war, is today indivisible. If the aggressors of today have to be checked, the aggressors of yesterday have also to be called to account. Because we have sought to cover up past evil, though it still persists, we have been powerless to check the new evil of today.

Evil unchecked grows, evil tolerated poisons the whole system. And because we have tolerated our past and



present evils international affairs are poisoned and law and justice have disappeared from them.

We have met here especially to discuss the aerial bombardment of open towns and civilian populations. Horror has piled on horror from day to day, and though the present is terrible to contemplate, the future seems to hold something that may be incredibly worse. Recently I visited Barcelona and saw with my own eyes its ruined buildings, its gaping chasms and the bombs hurtle through the air, bringing death and destruction in their train. That picture is imprinted in my heart, and each day's news of bombing in Spain or China stabs me and makes me sick with the horror of it. And yet over that picture there is another—that of the magnificent people of Spain who have endured and fought against these horrors for two long years with unexampled heroism and written with their own blood and suffering a history that will inspire ages to come. To these great men and women of Republican Spain I offer on behalf of the Indian people our respectful homage. And to the people of China also, knit to us by a thousand bonds since the dawn of history, we stretch out our hands in comradeship. Their perils are ours, their suffering hurts us, and we shall hold together whatever good or ill fortune may befall us.

We are deeply moved by these aerial bombardments in Spain and China. And yet aerial bombing is no new thing for us. The evil is an old one, and because it went unchecked it has grown to those vast and terrible dimensions. Have you forgotten the bombing on the North-West Frontier of India, which has been going on now for many long years and still continues? There are no great cities there like Madrid and Barcelona and Canton and Hankow, but the villages of the Indian frontier also shelter human beings, men, women and children, and they also die and are maimed when bombs from the air fall on them. Do you remember that this question of aerial bombing was raised many years ago in the League of Nations, and the British Government refused to stop it on the frontier? This was called police action, and they

insisted on its maintenance. The evil went unchecked, and if it has grown now is it surprising? On whom lies the responsibility?

The Prime Minister of Great Britain has recently offered to withdraw his reservation if there is general agreement in regard to the stoppage of aerial bombing. But that offer is an empty one, unless he takes action and stops all bombing on the frontier. Till then his protests against other people's bombing will have little meaning and less value.

The Dean of Chichester demanded yesterday at this Conference that no treaty should be made with countries that were carrying on aerial bombing, a sentiment that was rightly applauded. What of England then, which is still responsible for bombing on the frontier of India? Is it because the British Government cannot approach this question with clean hands, that they have developed an incredible foreign policy and now seek friendship and agreements with a Power that is most responsible for this bombing in Spain? I wish to dissociate India completely from this policy of encouraging the evil-doer and aggressor and to say that the people of India will be no party to it and will resist it whenever they have a chance to do so.

We have seen the tragic farce of non-intervention in Spain, which, under the cover of fair words and democratic procedure, has aided the insurgents and the invaders of Spain and prevented the people of the country from obtaining even the means of defence. The seas and a hundred doors are open for supplies to reach the insurgents, but the Pyrenees frontier is closed in the name of non-intervention, though women and children die through bombing or are starved from lack of food.

We blame and condemn the invaders and aggressors in Spain, but they have at least openly defied all canons of international law and decency and challenged the world to stop them. What of those Governments who, while bravely talking of peace and law, have submitted to this challenge, adapted themselves to each fresh act of aggression, and tried to make friends with the evil-doers? What

of those who have criminally stood by and shown indifference when life and what was more sacred than life itself was crushed and dishonoured?

Even today the aggressor nations are far weaker in numbers and strength and resources than the other countries. And yet the latter appear helpless and incapable of taking effective action. Is it not so because their hands and feet are tied by their past and present imperialist policies? These Governments have failed; it is time that the people took action and compelled them to mend their ways. This action must be immediately to stop aerial bombardments, to open the Pyrenees frontier, to permit the means of defence and food to reach Republican Spain. If bombing is to continue, anti-aircraft guns and other apparatus meant for defence must be allowed to go through.

What vast destruction there has been during these last two years in Spain and China! The starving and the wounded, the women and the children cry aloud piteously for help, and it is the business of all decent and sensitive people all over the world to help. This is a world problem, and we must organize on a world basis. The real burden of the struggle has fallen on the people of the stricken countries; let us at least carry this small burden.

I am glad to tell this conference that the Indian National Congress has organized and is soon sending a medical unit to China. We have also met with considerable success in India in our boycott of Japanese goods, as the export figures demonstrate. A recent incident will indicate the strength of our feeling for the Chinese people. In Malaya the Japanese owned iron and tin mines which employed Chinese workers. These workers refused to help in producing munitions for Japan and left the mines. Thereupon Indian workers were engaged, but at our request they also refused to work there, although this meant privation and suffering for them.

And so the struggle goes on. How many of our friends and colleagues and dear ones have died in this struggle already, and not died in vain. How many of us who are

gathered here may go the same way and not meet again? But whether we live or die, the cause of peace and freedom will remain, for that is greater than us—it is the cause of humanity itself. If that perishes, then all of us perish. If it lives, we live also, whatever fate may befall us. } To that cause then let us pledge ourselves.

## *The Betrayal of Czecho Slovakia*

THE EDITOR,

*Manchester Guardian*, MANCHESTER.

SIR,

As an Indian, intensely interested in Indian independence and world peace, I have followed recent developments in Spain and Czecho-Slovakia with anxious interest. For some years past the Indian National Congress has criticized and dissociated itself from British foreign policy, which has seemed to us consistently reactionary and anti-democratic, and an encouragement to Fascist and Nazi aggression. Manchuria, Palestine, Abyssinia, Spain agitated the people of India. In Manchuria the foundations were laid for encouraging triumphant aggression, all covenants and rules of international law were ignored, and the League of Nations sabotaged. With all our sympathy and goodwill for the Jews in their distress in the face of fierce and inhuman persecution in Europe, we considered the struggle in Palestine as essentially a national struggle for freedom which was suppressed by violence by British Imperialism in order to control the route to India. In Abyssinia there was a gross betrayal of a brave people. In Spain little was left undone which could harass the Republic and encourage the Insurgents. Having decided that the Spanish Government should lose or was going to lose, the British Government tried in a variety of ways to hasten the desired end, and even insult, injury and gross humiliation by the Insurgents were endured.

The fact that everywhere this policy has been a disastrous failure has not deterred the British Government from pursuing it. The consequences of the rape of Manchuria we see all around us in the world today.

The problem of Palestine grows worse from day to day; violence counters violence and the Government uses ever-increasing military forces and coercion in an attempt to subdue a people. It is not always remembered that the problem is largely the creation of the British Government and it must shoulder the responsibility for much that has happened. Abyssinia, as your correspondent points out, still remains unconquered and is likely to remain so. In Spain a heroic people have refused to fall in with the wishes of the British Government and have demonstrated that they will not be and cannot be crushed or subdued.

It is a remarkable record of failure. And yet the Government of Great Britain is not capable of learning from it and mending its ways. It pursues even more intensively its policy of encouraging aggression and giving support to General Franco and the Fascist and Nazi powers. No doubt it will carry on in this way, if allowed to do so, till it puts an end to itself as well as the British Empire, for overriding every other consideration are its own class sympathies and leanings towards fascism. That will certainly be a service it will render, howsoever unwittingly, to the world, and I would be the last person to object to an ending of imperialism. But I am deeply concerned with the prospect of world war and it distresses me exceedingly to realize how British foreign policy is directly leading to war. It is true that Herr Hitler has the last and determining word in this matter, but Herr Hitler's decision itself will largely depend on the British attitude. This attitude has so far done everything to encourage him and to bully and threaten Czecho-Slovakia. So, if war comes, the British Government can have the satisfaction or otherwise of feeling that they were largely responsible for it, and the people of Britain, who have put this Government in power, can draw what comfort they can from this fact.

I had thought that nothing that the Government did could surprise me (unless it suddenly turned progressive and worked for peace). But I was mistaken. Recent developments in Czecho-Slovakia, and the way the British

Government, directly and through its mediators, has bullied and threatened the Czech Government at every turn, has produced a feeling of nausea in me, and I have wondered how any Englishman with any trace of liberal instincts or decency could tolerate this. I have wondered still more how those who talk so loudly of peace could have supported, actively or passively, this obvious invitation to war.

Recently I spent some time in Czecho-Slovakia and came into contact with numerous people, both Czech and German. I returned full of admiration for the admirable temper of the Czechs and the democratic Germans who, in face of grave danger and unexampled bullying, kept calm and cheerful, eager to do everything to preserve peace, and yet fully determined to keep their independence. As events have shown, they are prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to satisfy every minority claim and preserve peace, but everybody knows that the question at issue is not a minority one. If it was a love of minority rights that moved people, why do we not hear of the German minority in Italy or the minorities in Poland? The question is one of power politics and the Nazi desire to break up the Czecho-Soviet alliance, to put an end to the one democratic State in Central Europe, to reach the Rumanian oil fields and wheat, and thus to dominate Europe. British policy has encouraged this and tried to weaken that democratic State.

In any event, we in India want no fascist or imperialism, and we are more convinced than ever that both are closely akin and dangers to world peace and freedom. India resents British foreign policy and will be no party to it, and we shall endeavour with all our strength to sever the bond that unites us to this pillar of reaction. The British Government has given us an additional and unanswerable argument for complete independence.

All our sympathies are with Czecho-Slovakia. If war comes, the British people, in spite of their pro-Fascist Government, will inevitably be dragged into it. But, even then, how will this Government, with its patent sym-

pathies for the Fascist and Nazi States, advance the cause of democracy and freedom? So long as this Government endures, Fascism will always be at the doorstep.

The people of India have no intention of submitting to any foreign decision on war. They alone can decide and certainly they will not accept the dictation of the British Government, which they distrust utterly. India would willingly throw her entire weight on the side of democracy and freedom, but we heard these words often twenty years ago and more. Only free and democratic countries can help freedom and democracy elsewhere. If Britain is on the side of democracy, then its first task is to eliminate empire from India. That is the sequence of events in Indian eyes, and to that sequence the people of India will adhere.

Yours, etc.,

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

27, ST. JAMES'S STREET,  
LONDON, S.W. 1,  
*September 8, 1938.*



## 5

### *London in Suspense*

*September 28, 1938.*

AFTER the mysterious happenings behind the scenes of the past few weeks, the journeyings to and fro, the appeals and the ultimatums, the mounting danger of war, Mr. Neville Chamberlain was at last to make a public pronouncement. He spoke through the radio, and I listened in to his broadcast. It was brief, hardly lasting eight minutes, and there was nothing that was new in what he said. It was an appeal to sentiment after the Baldwin manner, but lacking the Baldwin touch and personality. It struck me as singularly ineffective. There was no reference to the vital issues at stake, to the naked sword that was being flashed before the world terrorizing humanity, to the way of violence that was becoming the law of nations, and which Mr. Chamberlain himself had been encouraging by his activities. There was hardly a mention of the proud and gallant nation that was being offered as a sacrifice to the blood lust of the beasts of prey that surrounded it. The reference to it was a disparaging one—"a far-away country of whose people we know nothing." No hint at the dignity and courage, the love of peace and freedom, the calm determination and tremendous sacrifices of these far-away people, who had been coerced and abandoned so faithlessly by their friends. Nothing was said of the incessant threats and insults and lies that had flown unceasingly from Nazi quarters. Only a brief, apologetic reference to Herr Hitler's "unreasonableness."

I felt depressed, and my heart was heavy within me. Was virtue always to be treated so, unless it was accompanied by the big battalions? Was evil ever to triumph?

I thought that perhaps Mr. Chamberlain would do

greater justice to his theme the next day in Parliament. Perhaps, at last, he would give credit where it was due, and speak the truth without fear of Herr Hitler. Zero hour was approaching; it was time that the truth was out. But at the back of my mind I did not believe this, for Mr. Chamberlain's past stood up before me and was witness to his partiality for fascism and its works.

Meanwhile there was a digging of trenches in the parks and open spaces, and anti-aircraft guns were being mounted. A.R.P.—air-raid precautions—stared at us from every hoarding, and in innumerable improvised depots men and women tried on gas masks—true emblems in all their ugliness of this savage age of violence. People went about their businesses, but their faces were strained and full of apprehension. There was sorrow in many homes as their loved ones were summoned to put themselves in readiness for the coming war.

The hours slipped by and brought the dread moment nearer when, at the mad bidding of one man, millions of inoffensive, kindly, and well-meaning men would rush at each other and kill and destroy. The guns would thunder and belch out fire, and the whirl of the bombing aeroplanes would fill the sky. Zero hour. Would it be to-morrow or the day after?

Would this world of the twenty-eighth of September, nineteen thirty-eight ever be like this again?

*Once more we hear the word  
That sickened earth of old:  
"No law except the sword  
Unsheathed and uncontrolled."*

I am pressed by people to get a gas mask. The idea seems ridiculous to me. Am I to go about with a snout and the appearance of a beast? I am not adverse to risk and danger, and a few days in Barcelona gave me some taste of air raids. I do not believe in the efficacy of gas masks, and if danger comes the mask will be poor protection. Perhaps its main purpose is to give confidence to the wearer and keep up public morale. No one knows

how he will function face to face with extreme danger, yet I imagine that I shall not easily lose my head.

Still, the curiosity to see a gas mask at close quarters overcomes me, and I decide to go to one of the A.R.P. depots. I am fitted and later fetch a gas mask.

President Roosevelt has sent another message to Herr Hitler—a dignified, moving appeal in which the real point at issue is stressed. What a vast difference between what he says and how he says it and Mr. Neville Chamberlain's pronouncements! Even the printed word of President Roosevelt shows that there is a man behind it. What does reason or fear of consequences matter to Hitler? Is Hitler absolutely mad that he should risk his astonishing diplomatic victory, obtained, no doubt, under threat of violence, by plunging into war? Does he not know that defeat and disaster will certainly be his lot in a world war, that many of his own people will turn against him? Or perhaps he has taken the true measure of Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier and knows exactly how far they can go.

The streets leading to the Houses of Parliament are crowded and there is excitement in the air. Inside the House every bit of space is occupied and the Visitors' Galleries are overfull. The Lords are present in full force. They look a very bourgeois crowd, indistinguishable from humbler mortals. There sits Lord Baldwin next to the Duke of Kent. On the other side of him are Lord Halifax and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Diplomats' gallery is crowded. The Russian *chargé d'affaires* is there and the Czecho-Slovakian Minister, M. Masaryk, son of a famous father who built up the Czecho-Slovakian nation. Is the son going to see the destruction of the noble edifice that the father erected?

The Prime Minister begins. He has not a striking appearance; there is no nobility in his countenance. He looks too much like a business man. His delivery is fair. For an hour he speaks, a bald narrative with occasional personal touches and words that give a glimpse of suppressed excitement. Somehow I feel (or is it my imagina-

tion?) that the man was not big enough for the task before him, and this complex comes out repeatedly in his words and manner. He is excited and proud about his personal intervention, his talks with Hitler, the part he is playing in world affairs. Though Prime Minister of Britain, he is not used to these high tasks, and the intoxication of the adventure fills him. A Palmerston or a Gladstone or a Disraeli would have risen to the occasion. A Campbell-Bannermann would have put some fire into what he said. A Baldwin might have gripped the House, so would Churchill in a different way. Even Asquith would have spoken with a dignity suited to the occasion. But there was neither warmth nor depth of intellect in what Mr. Chamberlain said. It was very evident that he was not a man of destiny.

My thoughts flew to his meeting with Hitler, and I thought how overwhelmed he must have been by Hitler, overwhelmed not only by the frequent ultimatums of the latter, but by the dynamic and passionate and somewhat neurotic personality. For Hitler, for all his evil bent and distorted intent, has something elemental about him, and Mr. Chamberlain is of the earth, earthy. But even Mr. Chamberlain could have met that elemental force with another force, also elemental, but far more powerful—the force of organized democracy, the will of millions of people. He did not possess that power, nor did he seek to possess it. He moved in his narrow sphere and thought in limited terms, and never tried to develop or represent the urge that moves millions. It was inevitable, under the circumstances, that in the clash of wills he must go down before Hitler.

But was there even a clash of will? There was no hint of such real clash in what Mr. Chamberlain said, as there had been none in his deeds. He approached Hitler with sympathy and a large measure of approval and agreement. There was no talk of high principles, of freedom, of democracy, of human right and justice, of international law and morality, of the barbarity of the way of the sword, of the sickening lies and vulgarity of the high

priests of Naziism, of the unparalleled coercion of minorities in Germany, of refusal to submit to blackmail and bullying. On principles there was hardly any dispute; only some details were discussed. It is evident that Mr. Chamberlain's outlook, allowing for his English environment, was not so different from Hitler's.

In that long speech of his there was much in praise of Hitler, of his sincerity, of belief in his bona-fides, of his promise not to seek further territory in Europe. There was no mention of President Roosevelt and his striking messages. There was no mention of Russia, although Russia was intimately concerned with the fate of Czecho-Slovakia.

And what of Czecho-Slovakia herself? There was mention, of course, but not a word about the unparalleled sacrifices of her people, of their astonishing restraint and dignity in face of intolerable provocation, of their holding aloft the banner of democracy. It was an astonishing and significant omission, perhaps deliberately made.

Mr. Chamberlain's speech, however, held his audience. Not because of the excellence of the argument or the personality of the speaker, but because of the vital importance of the subject. He led up to a dramatic conclusion. He was going to Munich tomorrow, and so were Signor Mussolini and M. Daladier. And as a great favour Hitler had made a striking concession—he would defer mobilization for twenty-four hours!

Mr. Chamberlain succeeded in rousing the House by this element of drama and by the hope it brought of the possible avoidance of war. The strain of the last few days lessened and relief appeared in all the faces.

It was good that war had been pushed off, even though this might be only for a day or two longer. It was terrible to contemplate that war, and any relief from it was welcome.

And yet, and yet, what of Czecho-Slovakia, what of democracy and freedom? Was there going to be another betrayal, the final murder of that nation? This sinister gathering of four at Munich, was it the prelude to the

Four-Power Pact of Fascism-cum-Imperialism to isolate Russia, to end Spain finally, and to crush all progressive elements? Mr. Chamberlain's past record inevitably makes one think so.

So tomorrow Chamberlain meets Hitler and Mussolini. One was too much for him; what will be his fate with these two strong men? Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier will, under cover of intricate words, agree to everything that Hitler says, and then, as another of his great favours, Hitler will consent to postpone war by a few days or weeks. That will indeed be a great triumph, and Hitler will then be hailed as the prophet of peace. The Nobel Peace Prize might still be awarded to him, though Mr. Chamberlain will be a hot competitor.

## *The Choice before Us*

IN this grave hour, when the fates of nations hang in the balance and world war threatens humanity, the people of India cannot remain passive spectators of the march of historic events. They stand to gain or lose from them, as do others; and they have to decide how best to serve the cause of freedom that is dear to them. To wait on others to decide for them, or not to decide at all, is to prove unworthy of our historic destiny. All the peoples of the world desire peace, but individuals and those in power and authority are driving the world to terrible war even though they talk glibly of peace. The people of India are even more committed to the way of peace than other peoples.

The Congress has clearly laid down the principle which must govern our action in times of world crisis and war. By those principles we must stand. But the time is fast approaching for the application of those principles in the light of events and recent developments. A negative attitude of protest or the mere enunciation of a principle is not enough when a positive policy and constructive action become necessary. Our movement long ago passed the stage of protest in our national affairs and we took to constructive action. In foreign affairs also we are passing that purely agitational stage, and India's voice counts today and is listened to with attention in international gatherings. It becomes essential, therefore, that we should fashion our policy accordingly and link our national struggle with that policy.

Striving for national freedom, we have inevitably become anti-imperialists and have resisted not only foreign domination in India but imperialism itself. We saw in fascism a development of and a more dangerous form of imperialism, and we condemned it. We looked upon the two as twin brothers which crushed freedom and pre-

vented peace and progress. We realized that the conflict between fascism and imperialism on the one side and freedom and democracy on the other was world-wide, and gradually we ranged ourselves with the forces of progress and freedom. In Abyssinia, Spain, and China we condemned Imperialist and Fascist aggression.

Fascism crushed all progressive elements and set up new standards in cruelty and inhumanity. It gloried in brutality and openly aimed at war. Imperialist Powers talked in terms of democracy but aided and abetted fascism and helped it to grow. International morality decayed, all idea of collective action for peace was given up, and an unabashed gangsterism among nations grew up and was tolerated. Yet it was clear that only by collective action could the aggressor be stayed and peace maintained. A surrender to violence and aggression was no basis for peace, for the aggression and blackmail grew by every surrender and brought world war ever nearer. It was not difficult for this aggression to be checked and peace ensured if those Powers who believed in peace acted together, for their strength was far greater than that of the Fascist aggressor. But many of these very Powers who talked of peace and democracy were imperialist and they sympathized with fascism and encouraged it.

The British Government has a special responsibility for the growth of fascism and thus for bringing war nearer. They tolerated aggression in Manchuria, took part in the betrayal of Abyssinia, and indirectly aided the Fascist rebels in Spain. Their general policy was one of consistently encouraging Fascism and Naziism. They did not succeed in Spain because the people of Spain refused to fall in with their wishes and fought with unsurpassed courage and determination for their freedom.

In Czecho-Slovakia the incredible happenings of the past few weeks have shown to what depths the British and French Governments can sink in their desire to increase the power and prestige of Nazi Germany at the cost of the destruction of democracy in Central Europe and the coercion and dismemberment of a gallant and friendly



state which had put faith in their word. This act of gross betrayal and dishonour did not even bring peace, but has brought us to the threshold of war. Yet peace was to be had for the asking by building up a joint peace front between England, France, Russia and other Powers, which would have been too powerful for Nazi Germany to dare to challenge. The British Government refused to line up with Russia and made Hitler believe that he could deal with Czecho-Slovakia singly, with England and other Powers looking on. They ignored Russia in all their negotiations and worked in alliance with Hitler for the crushing of Czecho-Slovakia. They preferred the risk of making Hitler dominant in Europe to co-operation with Russia in the cause of peace. Their class feelings and hatred of the new order in Russia were so great that everything else was subordinated to it. They gladly agreed, at the bidding of Hitler, to the termination of the alliance between Russia and Czecho-Slovakia, and thus sought to isolate Russia. The next obvious step was a Four Power Pact between England, France, Germany, and Italy, an alliance between imperialism and fascism in order to make the world safe for reaction and for the crushing of the progressive elements all over the world. But the overweening ambition of Hitler has come in their way and an outraged public opinion has cried halt. They have talked of peace, but have deliberately avoided the obvious way to peace, and every step they have taken has been an encouragement to Hitler to wage war.

They have arrived at the precipice from which, perhaps, retreat may be impossible, and yet there is not even now a marked change in their pro-Fascist policy. If war comes they will talk of democracy, but if they continue as governments they will still act in the imperialist-fascist way and betray that very democracy if they have the chance to do so. No one who has followed their activities in the past can doubt this or rely on them.

And yet, whether there is war or peace, the fate of Czecho-Slovakia is a vital matter to the world and to all who stand for democracy and freedom. The momentous

struggle between fascism and anti-fascism is being and will be fought on this issue, and the result of it must have far-reaching consequences. India must be vitally interested in it, for it affects her own future. We cannot tolerate the defeat of democracy and the world domination of fascist imperialism. Britain, perhaps preserving the outward forms of democracy, would then turn more definitely fascist; France may do likewise. If this grave danger threatens, then no people or individuals can be neutrals or onlookers, and we have to cast our full weight on the side of democracy, serving thereby the cause of our own freedom. Not to do so might help fascism and reaction.

Governments have power to shape a country's policy and to give it a right or wrong turn. But in moments of crisis, of war, and potential war, popular forces emerge and grow and make a vital difference. They change governments or compel them to act in a different way. It is these progressive forces that we see growing up around us, and if the crisis develops into war or otherwise they will grow all the more. We have to reckon with these forces, to welcome them, and to co-operate with them. It is fear of these that has prevented the British Government from co-operating with the Soviet Union in ensuring peace and has made them seek alliance with the Nazis even at the cost of weakening their empire.

Yet there are obvious dangers with an imperialist and reactionary government exploiting for its own purposes in war-time the slogan of democracy. Do we not have now even Hitler and Mussolini giving their approval to the principle of self-determination, choosing to forget what they have done and are doing to many of their own people? Have we forgotten the fine phrases and slogans used by the British Government during the last war? Obviously we cannot be taken in by phrases again and allow ourselves to be exploited for imperialist purposes. We cannot be parties to the horror and disillusion of the last war.

It is true that this very memory of the past will cling to us and be a constant reminder to us of what we should

not do. It is true also that there is a greater realization of the issue today, a vaster mass consciousness, a greater vigilance among the people. The existence of the Soviet Union itself and the astonishing fight for democracy in Spain are significant. And yet who can say that vast numbers of people will not be misled again and their courage and sacrifice and idealism not exploited for base ends, leaving after the holocaust of war the same misery, the same injustices, imperialism and fascism?

How to avoid this terrible danger and yet how not to be a mere spectator when the most vital issues are at stake? It is a question most difficult to answer for every person who cares for freedom and democracy and world peace and order. For us in India the difficulty is no less. We sympathize with all our heart with Czecho-Slovakia in her struggle for freedom, we realize the world significance of it, the momentous consequences which flow from it. We want to help her in her struggle to the best of our ability, for thereby we help the cause of freedom and democracy throughout the world. We want to combat fascism. But we will not permit ourselves to be exploited by imperialism, we will not have war imposed upon us by outside authority, we will not sacrifice to preserve the old injustices or to maintain an order that is based on them. We will not and cannot forget our own struggle for freedom. Slogans which may sound pleasant to the ear but have little reality behind them or vague promises which have been broken often before, cannot determine our course of action. Will anyone dare to ask us to fight for democracy and deny us that democracy?

It is a terrible predicament and a difficult question to answer. Yet the answer must be given, and given in clear language. The Congress, in its resolutions, has already clearly indicated what this answer must be. We have to amplify this and apply it, in terms of constructive statesmanship, to the needs of the hour.

Whether there is war or a so-called peace which is continuous conflict and a herald to war, we must be clear what we are aiming at and fight for that. We must not

permit vague slogans or what are termed military necessities to take away such liberties as we possess and to divert us from our objective. We must have no imperialist settlement at the end, but the liquidation of imperialism itself. We must have a real League of Nations controlling armaments and air services, and collective security based on freedom and social justice. And those who have the conduct of war or peace must be people who believe in these objectives.

If I were an Englishman I would not trust the present British Government in war or peace, and I would not like to commit myself to their care to be used and exploited as they wish. Their talk of peace and democracy has been pure bluff. They could have ensured peace by co-operating with France, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America, and as for democracy, they have done their utmost to slay it in Central Europe. I would demand that this Government must go. So long as it remains I would fear betrayal.

But as an Indian I must confine myself to India. It is time that the problem of our independence was faced and settled finally. We have had enough delay, and if every group of people are considered worthy of self-determination, the three hundred and seventy millions of India have waited long enough for it. There is no other way of settling this question except by recognition of our right to independence, and through a constituent assembly. The proposed Federation is dead; let there be no further talk of it. We have bigger questions to decide, vaster problems to settle, and the sooner we set about them the better. More and more people, even in England, have come to realize that it is both good politics and good sense to have a friendly and free India by their side rather than a hostile India ever giving trouble and weakening them in times of crisis. As a prelude to the new age of freedom and democracy, for which we work and for which we may have to fight, India must have the full sense of freedom.

But we are in the midst of a crisis, and intricate

schemes cannot be evolved in a day. What can be done without delay? India's right to independence must be recognized, as also the fact that her constitution will be drawn up by a constituent assembly elected by adult franchise. A committee consisting of representatives of the people should be set up to work out the details for the election of this assembly. And immediate steps should be taken for the transitional period so that a popular direction is given to affairs. With this background, questions of trade and economic relations between India and England will be considered in a friendly spirit, and I have no doubt that India will seek to do justice to all just interests of the British people in India.

An India with her freedom assured to her, and working for the establishment of a democratic State, will be a pillar of strength to freedom and democracy elsewhere, and will throw in her weight and resources, in war or peace, for the defence of democracy. She will most willingly join forces in the defence of Czecho-Slovakia, to combat fascism, to work for a settlement to do away with the injustices of the past and the present and lay the foundation of a true world order. Then India and England, if England also pursues the paths of freedom and justice, will co-operate together for peace and the good of humanity.

*September 28, 1938.*

## *Relief for Ten Days*

IN this strange world that we live in we have to be thankful for small mercies. If Herr Hitler rattles his sabre, threatens all and sundry, and declares Germany's God-given right to dominate Europe and the world, we seek consolation in the thought that, after all, he is not marching tomorrow on a neighbouring country. If Signor Mussolini merely curses and denounces all countries that oppose him and their timid Ministers and proclaims that Italy can no longer be a prisoner in the Mediterranean and must expand her empire, we are relieved to find that, after all, he is not immediately going to march on Tunis or Nice or Djibuti or take possession of the Suez Canal. Our standards of examining and judging the spoken word of diplomats and men in authority have changed greatly since Fascism and Nazism introduced their language.

War has been very near during these days, and the fear of it has induced even Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax to begin a flirtation with Soviet Russia. But for ten days at least there is going to be peace, and for that the credit must go to President Roosevelt. After listening to the quibbling of the Chamberlains and Daladiers, it is a relief to hear the clear, firm voice of Mr. Roosevelt. That voice has power behind it, the power of a mighty nation, and it must be heard even by Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. Because of that stern warning from across the Atlantic, Herr Hitler has summoned the Reichstag for April 28 to listen to his reply. So there will be peace till the 28th at least, and perhaps longer.

Three years ago the British Government addressed a questionnaire to the Nazi Government, more or less on the lines of Mr. Roosevelt's present approach. That questionnaire was ignored and thrown into the waste-

paper basket. No reply was given. There is going to be a reply this time, for America counts more than England, and silence itself is the most significant of replies. We can well guess what the German and Italian replies will be from the tone of their Press. These replies will refuse to give the guarantees asked for and will reject the idea of a joint conference with Soviet Russia as one of the parties to it. They will declare an entire absence of intention to act as aggressors, but will proclaim their right to expand and to resist "encirclement."

It is possible, though still unlikely, that President Roosevelt's dramatic and forceful intervention might avert war. It may delay it. Such an attitude, taken in common with England, France, and Soviet Russia eight months ago, would have scotched all present chance of war and saved Czecho-Slovakia and Spain. But Mr. Chamberlain was bent on his policy of "appeasement," and the consequences of that policy face us today.

It is clear now that throughout the past two years or more Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax have consistently followed a policy which aimed at a political and economic alliance with Nazi Germany. In their attempt to gain this they sacrificed their friends and allies and endangered the safety of their own country and empire. For the fall of Spain is a greater danger to England and France than almost any other possible disaster could have been. For this Mr. Chamberlain laboured with an astonishing blindness and obstinacy. He succeeded, and now that very success has shown the utter failure of his policy.

Why did Mr. Chamberlain persist in this dangerous course, which could only lead to catastrophe? In the world today three Powers dominate the scene; all others are secondary and have lost initiative. These three Powers are Nazi Germany on the one side and the United States of America and Soviet Russia on the other. Mr. Chamberlain knew that England could not function alone in any major policy. She had to choose sides, and he made her choose the side of Nazi Germany, for any co-opera-

tion with Russia was hateful to him, and, in spite of all the soft words and pious phrases, he disliked American democracy. The only alternative was collective security, with Russia as a partner in the undertaking.

Every act of fresh aggression of the Nazis or the Italian Fascists pained him, no doubt, but he accepted it, stuck to his Munich policy, and made it easier for the next aggression to take place. If British public opinion grew too agitated and alarmed, he delivered a brave speech which soothed people and strengthened his hold on them. But the same policy continued.

It now seems possible that, in spite of himself, he might be forced into a war with Germany, and this possibility has induced him to make friendly overtures to Russia. For without Soviet assistance England and France would put up a poor show. Yet even now the Munich policy shows its face and governs Mr. Chamberlain's mind and hand. Is it right or reasonable to expect him to discard his prejudices and to change his spots overnight?

If conflict with Germany comes, then it will be in spite of Mr. Chamberlain, and yet it will be Mr. Chamberlain who will be in control in England. Chamberlainism will still flourish and may still betray the forces of democracy. Can any democrat view this prospect without dismay? The British Labour Party has already, in accordance with its traditional policy, surrendered to Mr. Chamberlain, and the forces opposed to him are weak. Some may cry "Chamberlain Must Go," but let us recognize that his hold on the British public is still strong. And that is the misfortune of the British public and of democracy.

It is true that a war against Naziism and Fascism, and especially one in which Soviet Russia is engaged, will release powerful forces which Mr. Chamberlain cannot suppress. It is also true that everyone who cares for freedom and democracy will desire the triumph of the progressive side. But to line up under Chamberlainism is a hard and difficult task for those who have seen and felt the heart-breaking results of this treacherous policy.



For us in India our path is clear. It is one of complete opposition to the fascists; it is also one of opposition to imperialism. We are not going to line up under Chamberlainism; we are not going to throw in our resources in defence of empire. But we would gladly offer those very resources for the defence of democracy, the democracy of a free India lined up with other free countries.

*April 18, 1939.*



## *War Aims and Peace Aims*

### I

THE statement<sup>1</sup> issued by the Working Committee of the Congress has drawn public attention to certain aspects of the war situation which were sadly ignored. There was a tendency, on the one hand, to talk in terms of India rushing into the war without thought or aim or purpose, and on the other hand of vague resistance to war. Both these attitudes were negative attitudes which did not take into consideration the realities of the present situation and the numerous developments that have taken place in the world and in India. Neither attitude was that of constructive statesmanship. The Working Committee has done a great service by its constructive lead to the nation. That service is not confined to India only; it extends to all those who think in terms of freedom and democracy and a new order, and there are vast numbers of such people in the world today. In effect, therefore, the Working Committee have given a lead to the progressive forces all over the world. We do not know how far this voice of India will go in these days of war and difficulty in communication, or how many outside India will hear it. But we are sure that those whom it reaches will welcome it and support a clear enunciation of war and peace aims.

The Committee's statement necessarily dealt with certain broad principles. These principles will, however, have to be translated into concrete terms, and it seems to us desirable that public consideration should be given to this matter. In this grave crisis none of us can afford to take refuge in negation or in mere slogans, howsoever pleasing they may sound. The slogans, if they have any relation to fact, must be capable of application in terms of the present. To that application we must address our-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B I.

selves. It may be that our efforts fail and that application cannot take place today, and we are led by the inheritance of the past and the implacable urges of the present to a conflict with all its unfortunate implications. That would be misfortune for India and the world, especially at this moment, when bold statesmanship is demanded to rid the world of oppression and tyranny and the exploitation of human beings. The path is difficult, yet there is a path, though the obstructions are many and not all of our making; there is a door through which we may pass to the garden of the future, but that door is guarded by folly and ancient privileges and vested interest.

Before we consider war aims and peace aims, let us define our approach to the problem. In India today the war is still a far-away affair, exciting enough, but something apart from us, affecting us little. This is not so in Europe and elsewhere, for there it is constant sorrow and misery, and imminent danger and death and destruction, and a tension that breaks the heart, for innumerable multitudes. There is no home in Europe which is free from this gnawing fear and this sinking of the heart, for the world they have known has come to an end and horror has descended upon them, horror almost without end for themselves, for their dear ones, for much they have valued in life. Brave men and women, pawns in the hands of elemental forces which they cannot control, face the issue with courage, but the only hope that illumines their minds for a while is the hope of a better future for the world, so that their sacrifice may not have been in vain.

Let us think of these people in various countries, whether that country is Poland or France or England or Russia or Germany, with respect and full sympathy. Let us not presume to make fun of their suffering or say anything unthinkingly which hurts those who have to carry this heavy burden. We have had an old quarrel with England, though not with the people of England. That quarrel will end with our freedom. Only then we can make friends on equal terms with England. But for the English people in their present misfortune, as for other

peoples, we have only sympathy and goodwill. We also know that whatever their imperialist Government may have done or may do in the future, there is a large fund of sympathy for freedom and democracy today among the English people. It is for these ideals that they fight. These ideals are ours also, though we fear that Governments may belie their words and their professions. Imperialism holds sway still in many parts of the world, and notably in India. And yet 1939 is not 1914. This quarter of a century has brought mighty changes in the world and in India, changes not so much in the outer structure, but in minds of people and in their desire to change this outer structure and put an end to an order based on violence and conflict.

In India we are very different from what we were in 1914. We have gained strength and political consciousness and a capacity for united action. In spite of our manifold difficulties and problems, we are no weak nation today. Our voice counts to some extent, even in international affairs. If we had been free we might have even succeeded in preventing this war. Sometimes the Irish analogy is placed before us. While we may learn much from Ireland and her struggle for freedom, we must remember that we are placed differently. Ireland is a small country which is geographically and economically tied to Britain. Even an independent Ireland cannot make much difference to world affairs. Not so India. A free India, with her vast resources, can be of great service to the world and to humanity. India will always make a difference to the world; fate has marked us for big things. When we fall, we fall low; when we rise, inevitably we play our part in the world drama.

This war is, as the Working Committee have said, the inevitable outcome of all manner of contradictions and conflicts in the present political and economic structure. But the immediate cause of the war is the growth and aggression of Fascism and Naziism. Ever since the birth of Nazi Germany the Congress, with true insight, has condemned fascism and seen in it the intensification of

the principles of imperialism. A series of resolutions testify to this judgment of the Congress. It is clear, therefore, that we must oppose fascism, and a victory over fascism will be our victory also. But to us that victory has meaning only in the larger context of imperialism. We cannot score a victory over fascism by surrendering our freedom and the struggle to achieve it.

For us to bargain in the spirit of the market-place would ill serve our cause or suit India's dignity at a time of world peril. Our freedom is too precious to be bargained for, but it is too precious also to be ignored or put aside because the world has gone awry. That freedom itself is the very basis and foundation of the world freedom that is proclaimed. If we participate in a joint effort for freedom, that effort must be really joint, based on consent as between free equals. Otherwise it has no meaning, no value. Even from the point of view of success in the war, that free joint participation is of importance. From the wider point of view of the objects which the war is supposed to achieve, our freedom is essential.

This, we hold, is the background of any consideration of the problem of war and peace aims.

*September 21, 1939.*

## II

What will be the end of the war? How long will it last? What will Soviet Russia do? Will Herr Hitler seek peace after crushing Poland? We do not claim to have an answer to these and many other questions, and those who seek to answer them have, perhaps, little justification for doing so. We are, however, convinced that this war, if it does not annihilate modern civilization, will revolutionize the present political and economic order. We cannot conceive of empires and imperialism continuing in the old way after the war.

Soviet Russia is at present a mystifying factor in the world situation. It is obvious that whatever Russia does

will have important and far-reaching results. But as we do not know what she is going to do, we have to leave her out of our present calculations. The Russo-German Pact came as a shock and a surprise to many. There was nothing surprising in it except the manner of doing it and the moment chosen for it. At any other time it would have naturally fitted in with Soviet foreign policy. But there can be little doubt that at that particular moment it brought dismay to many friends of Russia. There seemed to be too much over-reaching, cynicism, and opportunism about it. That criticism applied to Hitler also, who overnight had dropped his fierce anti-Communism and apparently made friends with the Soviet. A cynic said that Russia had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact; another that Hitler was turning Communist as well as a patron of the Jews. All this seems to us fantastic nonsense, for there can be, and there is going to be, no real alliance between Hitler and Stalin. But both are willing enough to play at the game of power politics. Russia has suffered enough at the hands of England to resent it bitterly.

The Soviet's march into Eastern Poland was another shock. But it is yet difficult to say whether this was to counter the German army or to weaken the Poles or merely to take advantage of a particular situation from the nationalist point of view. From the meagre information that we possess it seems, however, that Russia's advance into Poland has certainly come in the way of German designs. It has prevented German occupation of Eastern Poland and cried a halt to the German army. More important still is the occupation of the entire Polish-Rumanian frontier by the Soviet army. This has made it certain that Germany cannot take possession of the Rumanian oil-fields which she coveted, and probably that she cannot draw upon the vast wheat supplies of Rumania. The Balkans are saved from German aggression, and Turkey breathes with relief. All this may mean little today, but in the future, as the war progresses, it will have a vital significance. It may be thus that Soviet Russia has rendered a great service to the cause of the

Western Allies, and Bernard Shaw's dictum that Stalin has made a cat's-paw of Hitler has some truth in it.

Herr Hitler has ominously hinted in his Danzig speech that he has some terrible secret weapon which he will not hesitate to use, howsoever inhuman it might be, if circumstances compel him to do so. What this novel terror is, no one knows. It might well be an idle boast. There are terrors enough for humanity in the armoury of every Great Power today, more weapons will be forged as the war proceeds and all the powers of science are harnessed to quench the insatiable thirst for blood. We cannot say which side will have the advantage in this gruesome competition.

The aeroplane has, so far, not been the vital factor which some people expected it to be, though it is murderous and destructive enough. Perhaps we have not yet seen full use made of it. But all the experience in Spain and China, as well as the growth of the means of defence against air attack, indicate that the air arm will not be the deciding factor.

There is a chance, it is said, that Hitler may try for peace after his Polish campaign is over, or Signor Mussolini might act on his behalf in this respect. But there will be no peace then, for peace means the triumph of Hitler and the submission of England and France to his might. There may still be some advocates of "appeasement" in England or France, but the temper of their people will not permit it. There is also a chance—a more probable one—of internal trouble in Germany, which might shorten the war. But on that, too, it is unsafe to rely, at any rate in the early stages of the war. The war is thus likely to be a long one running into two or three years.

There are too many uncertainties in war for prophecy to be made. Yet the human mind must look ahead and try to peep through the veil of the future. That future seems to indicate that the area of the war will spread and more and more nations will be dragged in. It will, in effect, become a world war where neutrals hardly count, and it will go on year after year, destroying and killing and reducing the world to waste and ruin till the

common-sense of war-worn humanity rebels against it and puts an end to it.

In this long war the advantages are all on the side of the Western Allies. Their economic and financial resources are far greater than those of Germany, and they will have a great part of the world to draw upon. In spite of German submarine activity or attack from the air, the sea routes will be more or less controlled by them. America and Asia and Africa will supply them with many of their needs, while Germany's sources of supply are strictly limited. We ignore for the present the part that Soviet Russia might play. This can be of tremendous importance both in the military and economic sense, but we think it highly unlikely that Russia will aid Nazi Germany.

If other countries join the war, the only possible allies for Germany are Italy and Japan. Japan will be immobilized to some extent by Soviet Russia, and her Chinese campaign has sobered her. Italy will make a difference in the Mediterranean, but not a vital one. She might even be more helpful to Germany as a neutral country supplying food and other necessities, and thus breaking the blockade. In any event, war against England and France will be very unpopular in Italy. Even Mussolini is said to have moderated his love for Hitler. Still, it is possible for Italy to join Germany.

On the side of the Western Allies there would be a tremendous acquisition of strength if the United States of America joined them. There is at present a marked isolationist tendency in the United States, but far stronger than that is the anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi feeling. On no account will America tolerate a victory for Hitler. It is extremely likely, therefore, that in the later stages of the war the United States will join England and France. Even before they do that they will help them in supplying their war needs, and, as in the last war, this very help will become an inducement to join.

Whatever the more fundamental reasons for the war, the conflicts between rival imperialisms, the final cause



was Nazi aggression. The last eighteen months of continuing Nazi aggression in Central Europe have embittered vast numbers of people all over the world against Nazi Germany, which has become in their eyes the embodiment of evil in the international sphere. This is a powerful psychological factor in favour of the Western Allies. Recent reports of internal trouble in Germany proper may be exaggerated, but such trouble is always likely, more especially if the war drags on and adds to the burdens and miseries of the people. It is certain that there will be continual trouble in Bohemia and Moravia and probably Slovakia. The people of Czecho-Slovakia, easily subdued because of their friends' betrayal, will take their revenge now.

All this indicates that in a long war—and the war is likely to be a long one—the scales will be heavily balanced in favour of the Western Allies. But that advantage will be theirs only if their war and peace aims are for real freedom and democracy and self-determination, so that the peoples of the world may know and believe that the objective is worth the terrible price they pay. It is not for the continuation of imperialism that they will fight and make sacrifices. And it is the peoples of the world who will have the final say, not the Governments that have misled them for so long. If Governments do not fall in with their wishes, they will have to go and give place to others.

*September 21, 1939.*

### III

What are the professed war aims of the Western Allies? We are told that they fight for democracy and freedom, for the ending of the Nazi régime and Hitlerism, for the liberation of Poland. Mr. Chamberlain has now added that Czecho-Slovakia must also be freed. We agree. But all this is not enough, and hence the importance of the invitation extended by the Working Committee to the

British Government to state fully and unequivocally what their war and peace aims are.

Let us carry the argument further. If Hitlerism is to go, it necessarily follows that there should be no truce or pacts with any Fascist Power, even other than Germany. It means that Japanese and Italian aggression should not be recognized, and our policy should be directed to assist China, in so far as we can, in her struggle for freedom. It means, further, that the policy applied to Fascism should be extended to imperialism, and both should be ended. In any event, and even apart from international developments, we must have a free and independent India. But for the present we consider Indian freedom in its world context of imperialism. To condemn fascism and seek to defend or maintain imperialism is illogical and absurd. A world which has had enough of fascism cannot tolerate imperialism. It is thus an inevitable consequence of a struggle against fascism that imperialism should also be ended, or else the whole purpose of that struggle is vitiated and it becomes a contest for power between rival imperialisms.

A statement of war aims should thus include: the liberation of countries taken by Hitler, the ending of the Nazi régime, no truce or pacts with Fascist Powers, and the extension of democracy and freedom by the winding up of the imperialist structure and the application of the principle of self-determination. There should, of course, be no secret treaties, no conquests, no indemnities or reparations, no bargains over colonial areas. In the colonies also the principle of self-determination should be applied, and steps should be taken to democratize them. All discrimination based on race must go. We can admit no peace settlement over the bodies of colonial peoples.

It is in no spirit of bargaining that we make these suggestions, nor is there the slightest desire to take advantage of another's difficulty. We sympathize with that difficulty, but that sympathy cannot make us forget our own difficulties and disabilities. If we desire the freedom

of Poland or Czecho-Slovakia, much more do we desire the freedom of China, and it is not just narrow self-interest that induces us to give first place to the freedom of India. Freedom can have no meaning for us if we ourselves do not possess it, and it would be a hollow mockery if we shouted for the freedom of a distant land and submitted to subjection ourselves. But even looking at it from the point of view of the war, such freedom is essential in order to make this a popular war, which can move the people to courage and sacrifice for a cause which they consider theirs. As this war goes on from month to month and year to year, and weariness comes over the peoples of all countries, it is this urge to defend one's own hard-earned freedom that will tell in the end. The war will not be won by mercenary armies with mercenary motives, howsoever efficient they might be.

Coming to India, the first step to be taken by the British Government is to make a public declaration recognizing India as a free and independent nation which can draw up her own Constitution. We must recognize that this declaration cannot be given full effect immediately, but it is essential, as the Working Committee have pointed out, that it should be applied, in so far as is possible, in the present. For it is that application that touches the minds and hearts of the people and impresses the world. It is this present that will govern the conduct of the war and give it that vitality which can only come from the yoking of the popular will to a great task. Whatever we do must be of our free will and choice, and only then will the effort be really joint, for it will then be based on the free co-operation of partners in a common undertaking.

Unhappily, the British Government, as is its way, has taken action already which makes reasonable approach from us difficult. They passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill through the House of Commons in all its stages in exactly eleven minutes, though they knew full well that we were entirely opposed to it. Here in India legislation and ordinances have been similarly

rushed through. The India Office and the Government of India still live in an age that is long past; they neither grow, nor learn, nor remember. Even the shock of war has not had much effect on their mental processes or their ancient ways. They take India for granted, not realizing that nothing can be taken for granted in this cataclysmic age, much less India, which, though quiet on the surface, is shaken by all manner of forces and vital urges.

Yet, in spite of this difficulty of approach, the Working Committee have, in the spirit of true statesmanship, stretched out their hand and offered their co-operation to the British people and all other people who struggle for freedom's cause. But India can only co-operate with dignity and freedom, or else she is not worth co-operation. Any other way is that of imposition, and we can no longer endure this.

How and to what extent is it necessary and possible to give present application to Indian freedom? It is clear that whatever we do must be of our free will and based on our decision. In matters pertaining to the war there must be equality of action, even though this cannot be put on the Statute Book. India may be technically at war, but there is no war situation in this country, and there is absolutely no reason why our normal legislative or judicial processes should be replaced by abnormal measures. These abnormal measures have been passed. They must remain dead letters, and all necessary steps should be taken through the Provincial Legislatures and the Provincial Governments. The Amending Act passed by the British Parliament should also remain a dead letter, and in so far as the Provincial Governments are concerned their powers and activities should in no way be limited. Such limitations and safeguards as exist in the Constitution should not be applied. So far there is little difficulty.

But it is essential that even during this interim period India's representatives should have effective control over the policies and activities in the centre in regard to external affairs, armed forces, and financial matters. Only in this way can a policy based on real consent be carried

through. For this purpose some *ad hoc* machinery will have to be devised. Amendments of the present Act are not desirable. The Act will have to go as a whole when the Constitution of India's making takes its place. Meanwhile effective interim arrangements can be made by consent.

It is clear that if India's war policy is to have popular backing and support, it must be carried out by popular representatives in whom the people have confidence. It is no easy matter to live down the prejudice of generations and to make our people look upon the effort as their own. This can only be done by taking them into our confidence, by explaining our policies, and by convincing them that it is to their advantage as well as for the world's good. That is the way democracy functions. We shall have to know the larger policies governing the war also, so that we can justify them before our people and the world.

A war policy for a nation must inevitably first take into consideration the defence of the country. India must feel that she is taking part in her own defence and in preserving her own freedom as well as helping in the struggle for freedom elsewhere. The army will have to be considered a national army and not a mercenary force owing allegiance to someone else. It is on this national basis that recruitment should take place, so that our soldiers should not merely be cannon-fodder, but fighters for their country and for freedom. In addition to this it will be necessary to have a large-scale organization for civil defence on a militia basis. All this can only be done by a popular Government.

Even more important is the development of industries to supply war and other needs. Industries must develop on a vast scale in India during war-time. They must not be allowed to grow in a haphazard way, but should be planned and controlled in the national interest and with due safeguards for workers. The National Planning Committee can be of great assistance in this work.

As the war progresses and consumes more and more

commodities, planned production and distribution will be organized all over the world, and gradually a world-planned economy will appear. The capitalist system will recede into the background, and it may be that international control of industry will take its place. India, as an important producer, must have a say in any such control.

Finally, India must speak as a free nation at the Peace Conference.

We have endeavoured to indicate what the war and peace aims of those who speak for democracy should be, and, in particular, how they should be applied to India. The list is not exhaustive, but it is a solid foundation to build upon and an incentive for the great effort needed. We have not touched upon the problem of a reorganization of the world after the war, though we think some such reorganization essential and inevitable.

Will the statesmen and peoples of the world, and especially of the warring countries, be wise and far-seeing enough to follow the path we have pointed out? We do not know. But here in India let us forget our differences, our Leftism and Rightism, and think of these vital problems which face us and insistently demand solution. The world is pregnant with possibilities. It has no pity at any time for the weak or the ineffective or the disunited. Today, when nations fight desperately for survival, only those who are far-seeing and disciplined and united in action will play a rôle in the history that is being made.

*September 23, 1939.*

## 9

*A Crumbling World*

DURING the last few weeks India has suddenly been forced to think hard about international happenings and their reactions on her. Some of us have been dabbling in international affairs for many years, and occasionally a passing interest was aroused among large numbers of people in the country in the fate of Abyssinia, Palestine, Czechoslovakia, Spain and China. Fundamentally, however, we were, as a people, far too much absorbed in our own national problems. The coming of the war in Europe led inevitably to a deeper interest in events abroad. Even so the struggle was a distant one, and our excitement was that of an onlooker. May 10, a date famous in Indian history, brought the invasion of the Low Countries of Western Europe, and the rapid developments that have followed each other since then have galvanized our minds and brought the possible consequences of the war very near to us. New problems suddenly confront us, entirely novel situations have to be faced.

The last two meetings of the Congress Working Committee met under these difficult conditions and tried to adjust themselves to them. The public has seen their resolutions and there has been some argument about them. It would be worth while, however, for us to consider dispassionately what has happened in Europe, with all its future implications, if we are to understand the curious and changing world that we live in. Wishful thinking is at any time an unhelpful occupation; today it is full of peril. All of us are much too apt to remain in the old ruts, to think the old thoughts, to utter the old slogans, even though everything else may have changed beyond recognition. Fundamental principles and objectives must have a certain stability and continuance, but in other ways reality demands that we adapt ourselves to it.

What has happened? The map of Europe has changed utterly and many nations have ceased to be. Poland went, Denmark and Norway succumbed, Holland collapsed, Belgium surrendered, France fell suddenly and completely. All these went into the German orbit. The Baltic countries and Bessarabia have been more or less absorbed by Soviet Russia.

These are mighty changes, and yet it is being increasingly realized that they are but the prelude of what is to come. We are not merely witnessing a great and overwhelming war with all its destructive horror. We live today in the midst of a revolutionary epoch of vast significance, more important and far-reaching perhaps than any given in recorded history. Whatever the outcome of this war may be, this revolution will complete its appointed course, and till this takes place there will be no peace or equilibrium in this planet of ours.

We must realize that the old world dies, whether we like it or not. Already those who were most representative of it have become phantom figures, ghosts of a yesterday that is no more.

If the Nazis won through, as they well might, there is little doubt of what they would try to make of Europe and the world. They would create a new type of European Union under German leadership and control, a Nazi Empire of Europe. The small States would go and so would democracy, as understood by us, and the capitalist system as it has prevailed. A form of State capitalism would flourish in Europe and big industry would be concentrated in the Germanic lands, the other countries, including France, being reduced largely to an agricultural status. This system would be based on a collective supernational economy and would be subject to authoritarian control. The Nazi Empire would have its colonies, chiefly in Africa, but it would also try to control the economy of other non-European countries and harness the labour power of their peoples. The economic weight of such a mighty authoritarian Union would be tremendous and the rest of the world would have to adapt itself to it.



Such is the Nazi thesis. What of England if this happens? If there is a complete German victory, England ceases to be a Power that counts. In Europe she has no influence left; she loses her empire. It is almost immaterial whether she joins the Germanic European Union or not. The centre of gravity of the British race shifts elsewhere, most probably to Canada, and they become closely allied to, or even absorbed in, the United States of America.

Much will depend upon Soviet Russia. There is little doubt that she dislikes intensely the rapid growth of Nazi power which may threaten her later. Nevertheless, she will adapt herself to the change unless the war drags on for a lengthy period and brings exhaustion of the combatants.

A swift German victory would thus lead to a Nazi Empire in Europe with outlying possessions. This may be allied to Japan in the East. Two other great federations will remain—Soviet Russia and the United States of America—both essentially hostile to Germany. The war may have ended, but the seeds of future wars will remain between these mighty groups.

What happens if the Nazis do not win within the next few months? Probably a long and exhausting war in which both combatants suffer greatly and are completely exhausted. The economic structure of England and Europe collapses, and the only possible future is one of large federations of nations, or of a world federation, based on a different economy and on strict world control of production, transport and distribution. The present-day capitalist system goes. The British Empire ends. Small States cannot exist as independent units. Possibly even the conception of money changes.

In any event therefore this war will bring about a fundamental political and economic change, a change that will be more in keeping with modern conditions which demand closer intercourse between nations and a breaking down of international barriers. The strength of Germany today lies not so much in her ruthless efficiency and military machine, as in the fact that, perhaps unconsciously, she has

become the agent of a historic process. She is trying to turn it in an evil direction; she may even succeed in this for a while. The weakness of France and England was essentially due to their desire to hold on to forms and structures which were doomed to disappear. They represented something that was dying, whether in their empires or in their economic system. They had repeated chances during the past twenty years of putting themselves in step with history, of being the leaders in building up a real international order based on social justice and national freedom. They preferred to hold on to their past gains and vested interests and empire, and now it is too late and everything slips out of their hands.

France passes away for a while. But England still fails to learn the lesson. Still she talks in terms of empire and seeks to preserve her special interests. It is sad to see a great people so blind to everything except the narrow interests of a class, and risking everything but not taking the step which would put them right with the world and with the great historic processes that are marching on with giant strides.

*July 16, 1940.*

*What of Us?*

WHETHER Germany wins or loses will obviously make a great difference to the future of Europe and the world. And yet, in either event, certain changes and developments of far-reaching significance are bound to take place. Small States will disappear and give place either to some world Federation or to three, or possibly four, Federations or Empire States. If the latter emerge, there will be continuing hostility and conflict, both internal and external. Internal, because an Empire State necessarily involves the enforced subjugation of other peoples and nations, which will continually attempt to free themselves. External, because there will be rivalry between the different Empire States or Federations. Each may try to develop some kind of autarchy or self-sufficient economy within its territories. But this can bring no equilibrium or stability, and either peacefully or through war, a single world Federation must emerge. It is inevitable that this should be so, for the alternative is continuing mutual destruction on a vast scale and a relapse into barbarism. Such a world Federation must be a real union of free nations. An imposed order means that the so-called Federation is really an Empire State with the seeds of disruption within it.

Whatever is the outcome of the war, it seems clear enough that the British Empire ends. There are inherent reasons why this should be so, but the course of the war has made this obvious. Even if a number of Empire States emerge, the British Empire, as constituted today, will not be one of them. There might conceivably be an Anglo-American Federation, to which some other countries adhere, or an Empire State. In such a Federation or Empire England's part will be a subordinate one. The type of spread-out empire which England possesses today cannot exist in future, except in the remote contingency of a world

Empire State being established. Such a far-flung empire necessitates a command of the seas and the world's trade routes as well as an effective command of the air. No country or group of States is likely to have this world predominance. If empires exist, therefore, they must essentially be compact empires, with possibly some distant colonial possessions, which do not make any essential difference.

For a year or so before the war began there was considerable discussion about the possibility of a Union or Federation between various nations. Clarence Streit's "Union Now" attracted much attention, and there were many other proposals. Nearly all of them suffered from the vital defect of looking at the world as if it consisted of Europe and America only. China, India, and other Eastern countries were almost ignored. These proposals, though much discussed and welcomed, never had a chance of adoption in the pre-war world. No major country had the least intention of countenancing them. And so the time for this passed, when it could have made a difference, and how bitterly must some countries and Governments regret this lost opportunity. As the French Republic lay dying, England's Government, compelled by the peril of the hour, made their remarkable proposal for a Union with France. It was too late then, as so much has been too late in England's story. But it demonstrated, in a flash, how the old ideas of independent countries, and even of the British Empire, no longer applied.

And yet some people talk still of dominion status and the like, not realizing that this idea is dead and cannot be revived. Some people again suggest a partitioning of India, on some strange and fantastic basis, forgetting that the world demands not further splitting-up, but a gathering together and a union of nations. It will tolerate no longer the small State.

What about our independence, then? Is this not a breaking-up of a present grouping of nations, and how does it fit in the future of world Federation? It is perfectly true that we want to end the British Empire because out of

imperialism no true federation can emerge. And, in any event, India is not going to remain in this Empire, whatever happens. But the independence that we seek has never been looked at as isolation or the mere addition of a new national State to a crowd of others. We have always realized and looked forward to the world gathering closer together, and functioning through federation or union, which we would gladly join. But to ask us to accept dominion status, or to try to impose a particular union on us against our wishes, is something which, in the world context today, is singularly absurd, and is in any event not going to be tolerated by us, whatever the consequences.

The third inevitable change of the war is likely to be the ending of present-day capitalism and the introduction of far more planning and control in the economic system throughout the world. Together with this, capitalist democracy will also change, for it is a kind of luxury system for well-to-do nations, and it will not survive the hard times that will come. Under stress of war this democracy has already gone in many countries.

It will be unfortunate if democracy itself disappears and gives place to forms of dictatorship. There is that danger and we must try to guard against it. But the democracy that can survive will have to be different in some ways and more efficient than the type we have seen fading away in the West.

In this picture that unrolls itself, where do we come in, where does India stand? That has been made clear enough. We are entirely opposed to Naziism and we think that it would be a tragedy if Nazi Germany dominated the world. But we are sick and tired of being imposed upon by British imperialism, even as it passes away, and we would sooner perish than be the tools of this or that imperialism. It is astonishing that even now the independence of India sticks in the throat of the British Government; it is amazing that they still behave in the old lordly way and expect us to carry out their behests. Still they threaten us with pains and penalties. Still they preach to us their homilies. Still they are blind to what is

happening. Do they imagine that they are strengthening themselves for this war by the policy they are adopting in India? Do they think that threats and compulsion are the keys to India's heart and India's help? They may get some money in this way, but they are running up an account against themselves in a currency that counts far more than gold or silver. There is anger today in India at what is happening and at the insufferable ways of numerous underlings.

To us waiting patiently for months and deliberately not trying to embarrass the English people in the hour of their trial and distress, this functioning of British imperialism has come as a revelation. Many of us sympathize with the British people, but we cannot help seeing that one of the war fronts of Britain today is in India and against us. If that is so we shall face it whatever the consequences. One thing may be taken for certain—we are not going to put up with dictation from any authority.

*July 17, 1940.*

*India and China*

## I. THE EASTERN FEDERATION

EVERYONE who has been following the course of events, and everyone who can at all pierce the veil of the future, must have come to the conclusion that we have come to the end of an age. The old world we have known so long is dead or lies dying before us. That, of course, does not mean that the world will cease to be. That does not even mean that civilization will perish. But it does mean that the many things that we have known—political forms, economic structures, social relationships, and all else connected with these—will undergo a vast transformation. If any person thinks in terms of the continuation of the world as we have known it, he thinks in vain.

It is patent that the day of small countries is past. It is also patent that the day of even big countries standing by themselves is past. Huge countries like the Soviet Union or the United States of America may be capable of standing by themselves, but even they are likely to join themselves with other countries or groups.

The only intelligent solution is a world federation of free countries. Perhaps we are not wise enough to seek that solution or strong enough to realize it.

If there is going to be no world federation in the near future, and if the day of individual nations is past, what, then, is likely to happen? There may be groupings of nations or large federations. There is a grave danger in this, as it is likely to lead to hostile groupings and therefore to the continuation of large-scale wars.

It is possible, also, that these groupings may be the first steps to the larger world grouping of nations.

In Europe people talk of a European federation or union; sometimes they include the United States of

America and the British Dominions in this group. They leave out always China and India, imagining that these two great countries can be ignored. There can be no world arrangement which is based on ignoring India or China, nor can we ever tolerate the exploitation of Asia and Africa by the combined European and American Powers.

If there are to be federations, India will not fit into a European federation where it can only be a hanger-on of semi-colonial status. It is obvious that under these circumstances there should be an Eastern federation, not hostile to the West, but nevertheless standing on its own feet, self-reliant and joining with all others to work for world peace and world federation.

Such an Eastern federation must inevitably consist of China and India, Burma and Ceylon, and Nepal and Afghanistan should be included. So should Malaya. There is no reason why Siam and Iran should also not join, as well as some other nations. That would be a powerful combination of free nations joined together for their own good as well as for the world good. Power would not be merely material power, but something else also, which they have represented through these long ages. It is time, therefore, in this fateful period of the breakdown of empires that we thought in terms of this Eastern federation and worked for it deliberately.

With two nations, even more than with others, this Eastern Federation will be intimately connected. These nations or groups will be the Soviet Union and America.

There is a great deal of talk about the downfall of Western civilization. This is probably correct in so far as the finance-imperialism of the West, as well as the capitalist order is concerned. But ultimately much that is best in European civilization should survive. Nevertheless, it is true, I think, that present-day civilization is ending and out of its ashes a new civilization will be built up, continuing, I hope, the best elements of the East and of the West. No country can do without the science of which the West has been the pioneer. That science and the



scientific spirit and method are the basis of life today, and there lies in science the search for truth on the one hand, and the betterment of humanity on the other. But the application of that science to evil ends has brought disaster to the West. It is here that India and China, with their restraining influence and long background of culture and restraint, come in.

So let us look forward and labour for an Eastern Federation, never forgetting that it is a step towards the larger world federation.

## 2. NEW ROAD TO CHINA

Recently there has been much controversy about the Yunnan-Burma Road. The building of this road was a big achievement for the Chinese Government. So much depended upon it that they devoted all their energies, in the middle of a devastating war, to building the road and the railway which would give them access to Burma and thereby to the wider world. The road was built and the railway, from all accounts, is also nearly ready.

Suddenly the fortunes of war in Europe underwent a swift change and France fell. Immediately Japan succeeded in getting the road to China from Indo-China closed. Soon after, the British Government, continuing its policy of appeasement to Japan, closed the Burma Road for three months. That act of appeasement did not bring satisfactory results to England, for immediately after it, Britishers were arrested and humiliated in Japan.

But the appeasement of one country often leads to the irritation of another. When this other country is the United States of America, the results are far-reaching. England could not afford to displease America, and when the three months were over the Burma Road was reopened.

This Burma Road has been helpful to China in her war. But it has had a far greater significance so far as we were concerned. It has brought China and India closer to one

another. China for the first time for some generations began to look towards her western and south-western neighbours. Her outlook, which had been governed so long by the treaty ports, was changed by circumstances, and the hand of destiny began to link together again the fate of India and China. Burma, the old-time "Swarnabhumi," was the golden link which joined China to India. So for us in India and for the people of China this Yunnan-Burma Road had great significance, and it opened out long vistas of mutual contact and co-operation.

The question has often arisen why there should also not be a more direct route between China and India. The high mountains intervened and separated us. But the mountains are no longer barriers to the intercourse of human beings, and the intellect of man has devised methods to overcome even these great sentinels of the north-east frontier of India.

We learn that it is proposed to develop a new route between China and India via Sadiya in Assam. The idea is to build a road on the Chinese side connecting the rail-head in Eastern Assam with it. Also to have an air service to Sadiya and possibly beyond, to Calcutta. This would not only shorten the journey very greatly; it would also reduce the cost of transport of goods. Chittagong would be the natural port for this traffic, though perhaps Calcutta might also be used for this purpose.

If such a route was developed there can be no doubt of the great advantages to Chittagong, Calcutta, and Bengal. A large part of the huge traffic to China would begin to flow through Bengal.

In the event, ultimately, of a railway line being built up to Sadiya from the Chinese side, this would mean connecting China with the Indian railway system, and thus in the future possibly with the European-Asiatic railway system.

But apart from the commercial and other material advantages which such a route would bring to India, our interest in its development would be great for cultural and psychological reasons. India and China would then be in

direct and intimate contact. The future points that way; the moving finger of time has written, and such contacts and friendship must develop.

We welcome, therefore, this proposal to have a direct air and land route between China and India via Sadiya in Assam, and we hope that it will bear early fruit.

### 3. A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The Eastern Group Conference<sup>1</sup> in Delhi has collected together a host of people of greater or less degree. Few of us are interested in this gathering or its objectives. Nor do we know much about the delegates who have come from various parts of the Empire of Britain. But one group of delegates is known to us, and is very welcome in India. These are the delegates from our neighbour Ceylon.

In the revolution that is encompassing the world and likely to bring about vast changes it is desirable for us to come into touch with our friends in Ceylon. We hope that their visit here will lead to the removal of many misunderstandings.

A very distinguished visitor, not connected with the Eastern Group Conference, will also be soon coming to India. He is from China, and he is a leading statesman and a noted scholar of that ancient land. His name is Tai Chi Tao. He is Minister of the Government of the Republic of China and is President of the Examination Yuan, which is an important group of departments of the Government.

President Tai Chi Tao is due to arrive in Calcutta by air from Rangoon on or about November 3, and he in-

<sup>1</sup> Conference of representatives of the Governments of the Eastern territories, called by the British Government for the purposes of planning the Imperial war effort. There was no representative of the Indian people at this Conference.

tends to spend about six weeks in India. We can assure him, on behalf of the Indian people, of a very warm welcome for many reasons. He comes as a representative of a great people and of a country struggling with amazing heroism for her freedom. That in itself would make him welcome here. He comes as an eminent scholar, deeply interested in the cultural contacts between India and China during the past ages. We understand that he is particularly desirous of visiting the historical places connected with the Buddhist faith in India as well as other cultural centres of this vast country. He comes also on a mission of goodwill to this country and as a symbol of the growing friendship between China and India.

That friendship is very precious to us, not only because of the thousands of golden links that have bound us in the past, but because of the future that beckons to both of us. The present is full of difficulty for all of us, and none may avoid this sorrow and travail. But the future that is taking shape in death and disaster will be a future in which China and India are bound to play a great part. This will be so not just because of the huge collections of human beings which inhabit these two countries, amounting to two-fifths or possibly nearly half of the entire population of the world. There is something much more than the weight of numbers involved in this, although numbers may not be ignored.

China and India have represented throughout the ages two distinct and deep-rooted civilizations and cultures, each very different from the other and yet with numerous common features. Like all ancient countries, they have gathered round them all manner of débris in the form of old custom and tradition which hinder growth, but underneath this mess of useless material there lies the pure gold that has kept them going for all these ages. Not all the degradation and the misfortunes that have befallen both China and India have melted this golden core which made them great in the past and which even today gives stature to them. In regard to China, as of India, it may well be said in the words of the poet Iqbal :

Yunnan-o-Misr-o-Roma sab mit gaye jahan se  
Ab tak magar hai baqi nam-o-nishan hamara;  
Kuchh bat hai ki hasti mitti nahin hamari  
Sadiyon raha hai dushman daur-e-zaman hamara.

For many years now, and more especially for the last three years and more, China has been going through the ordeal of fire. How can we measure the immeasurable suffering of the Chinese people, invaded and attacked by an imperialist aggressor, bombed in their cities night after night and made to face all the horrors of modern war by a first-rate power. London has suffered greatly from bombing during the last two or three months. But what of Chungking that has had to face this bombing for years now, and yet lives? We cannot measure this suffering, nor can we measure the determination and epic courage which has faced these disasters and sufferings unmoved and unbent. In the magnificent story of the Chinese people from the dawn of history to today there are many glorious periods and fine deeds. But surely the past three years will stand out even in that great record.

These years have been years of swift transition from the past to the present and preparation for the future that is to come. The dross and the débris are being burned away in the fire of a nation's suffering, and the pure metal comes out. We in India have had our own share of trials and tribulations and are likely to have much more of it in the near future. So nations who are slothful and who have sunk into subjection are made again; so China and India are being rejuvenated.

Both of them have a great part to play in the future; so let both hold together and learn from each other. We welcome again President Tai Chi Tao to this ancient land and trust that his visit will bear rich fruit in bringing the two peoples nearer to each other.

*November, 1940.*

PART FIVE  
*TOWARDS A CONSTITUENT  
ASSEMBLY*



*India Looks at the World*

NATIONALISM is in ill odour today in the West and has become the parent of aggressiveness, intolerance, and brutal violence. All that is reactionary seeks shelter under that name—fascism, imperialism, race bigotry, and the crushing of that free spirit of inquiry which gave the semblance of greatness to Europe in the nineteenth century. Culture succumbs before its onslaught and civilization decays. Democracy and freedom are its pet aversions, and in its name innocent men and women and children in Spain are bombed to death, and fierce race persecution takes place.

Yet it was nationalism that built up the nations of Europe a hundred years or more ago and provided the background for that civilization whose end seems to be drawing near. And it is nationalism which is the driving-force today in the countries of the East which suffer under foreign domination and seek freedom. To them it brings unity and vitality and a lifting of the burdens of the spirit which subjection entails. There is virtue in it up to a certain stage; till then it is a progressive force adding to human freedom. But even then it is a narrowing creed, and a nation seeking freedom, like a person who is sick, can think of little besides its own struggle and its own misery.

India has been no exception to this rule, and often, in the intensity of her struggle, she has forgotten the world and thought only in terms of herself. But as strength came to her, and confidence born of success, she began to look beyond her frontiers. The increasing interest she has taken in the problems of the world is a measure of the growth of her nationalist movement. Perhaps nothing is so surprising in India today as this anxious interest in foreign affairs and the realization that her own



struggle for freedom is a part of the world struggle. And this interest is by no means confined to the intelligentsia, but goes deep down to the worker, the petty shopkeeper, and even, to a certain extent, to the peasant. The invasion of Manchuria by Japan caused a wave of sympathy for China, and Japan, which had so far been popular with Indians, began to be disliked. The rape of Abyssinia by Italy was deeply felt and resented. The tragic events of Central Europe produced a profound impression. But most of all India felt, almost as a personal sorrow, the revolt against the Republic of Spain and the invasion of China, with all their attendant horrors. Thousands of demonstrations were held in favour of Spain and China, and out of our poverty we extended our helping hand to them in the shape of food and medical missions.

This reaction in India was not due primarily to humanitarian reasons, but to a growing realization of the significance of the conflicts in the world and to an intelligent self-interest. We saw in fascism the mirror of the imperialism from which we had suffered, and in the growth of fascism we saw defeat for freedom and democracy, for which we struggled. With our long experience of British Imperialism, we distrusted the assurances, so often given, of British support of collective security and the League of Nations. Because of this we followed, perhaps with greater clarity than elsewhere, the development of British foreign policy towards co-operation with the Fascist Powers, and our opposition to British Imperialism became a part of our opposition to all imperialism and fascism.

To this British foreign policy we were entirely opposed, and yet, as parts of the Empire, we were bound by it. By resolution and public declaration we dissociated ourselves from it and endeavoured, in such ways as were open to us, to develop our own foreign policy. The medical mission that we sent to China or the foodstuffs that went from India to Spain were our methods of asserting our foreign policy and dissociating ourselves from that of Britain. We laid down, further, our line of action in the event of world war breaking out. It was for the people of

India to determine whether India would join a war or not, and any decision imposed upon us by Britain would be resisted. Nor were we prepared on any account to permit our resources to be exploited for an imperialist war.

The Indian nationalist movement has stood for many years for full independence and the severance of our tie with the British Empire. Recent events in Europe have made this an urgent necessity for us, for we cannot tolerate association with British foreign policy and the possibility of our resources being utilized for wrong ends. We must control our foreign policy, our finances, and our defences, and have perfect freedom to develop our own contacts with other countries.

Foreign affairs are thus casting their long shadow over the Indian national struggle, and the growing consciousness of this makes India look at the world with ever-increasing interest. She thinks of the day, which may not be long distant, when she will be a free country, and already she prepares mentally for that change. The British Empire is fading away before our eyes, and everyone knows that it cannot hold India in subjection for long. Responsible statesmen in England no doubt realize this, and yet it is exceedingly difficult for them to give up the assumptions and mental atmosphere of a century ago, and adapt themselves to what logic tells them is the inevitable end.

That is the dilemma of Britain today. There are only two courses open to her in regard to India. The natural and the logical course is to recognize what must be and adapt herself gracefully to it. This means the immediate recognition of India's right to self-determination on the basis of complete freedom and the drawing up of India's Constitution by a Constituent Assembly consisting of her elected representatives. Such a decision, and immediate steps taken to implement it, would immediately bring about a psychological change, and the old atmosphere of conflict and hostility would give place to a spirit of co-operation. India, achieving her independence in this way, would not look unfavourably to certain privileges in the

matter of trade and commerce being granted to Britain. She might even accept certain financial burdens which in justice should not fall on her. We would be willing to pay this price for freedom with peace, for the cost of conflict will, in any event, be much greater. India would also be a friend and colleague in world affairs, provided Britain stood for freedom and democracy.

The other course is to keep India in subjection and attempt to impose vital decisions on her. This would inevitably lead to a major conflict with Indian nationalism. It might delay Indian freedom for a while, but certainly it would not delay it for very long; and it is possible that the conflict itself might precipitate matters. It was no easy matter for the British Government to suppress the last civil disobedience movement. Today the Congress and the national movement are far stronger than they have ever been, and Britain, on the other hand, thanks to Mr. Chamberlain's policy, is dangerously near to impotence in foreign affairs. That does not mean that Britain cannot strike hard at India. She can certainly do so, but it will be a very difficult task to undertake, and if international crisis intervenes, as it well might, a perilous one. It is not surprising, therefore, that the British Government have no desire whatever to force a conflict in India. They would welcome a settlement with India, if this could be obtained without giving up their vital and vested interests. But any settlement means, in fact, a settlement with the National Congress. This, if it is genuinely attempted and is to be successful, means facing up to all the implications of the first of the two courses outlined above. British Imperialism, by its very nature, is unable to do this. The British Government will therefore at all costs avoid the first course.

That is the dilemma, and there is no middle course, except one of marking time. But time runs fast in this age of dictators, and events follow one another with a startling rapidity. At any moment the edifice of "appeasement," which Mr. Chamberlain has built up so laboriously, even at the cost of what nations and indi-

viduals hold most dear, might collapse and bring catastrophe. What of India then? What will India do? That is the question that often worries British statesmen. For it will matter a great deal what India does. India will make a difference.

It is not as if India were waiting for a chance to profit by England's difficulty. Even during the Czecho-Slovakian crisis Mr. Gandhi made it clear that we do not blackmail or bargain. But it is manifestly absurd to imagine that India would in any way help a Government which was not only keeping her in subjection, but was also following a foreign policy which she detests and abhors. It is equally out of the question that we should forget our objective of independence and suspend our struggle simply because England was in difficulties. We shall pursue our path, and it seems inevitable that this will bring us into conflict with the British Government, for we shall resist anything that is imposed upon us against our will.

Even apart from the European or Far Eastern situation, internal conditions in India will not permit of marking time for long. There is an apparent quiet on the surface, and in a great part of India, Congress Governments are functioning in the Provinces, but there is an ominous rumbling, and signs are already visible pointing to an approaching crisis.

So the British Government cannot easily mark time for long. And yet they cannot make up their minds about India or any other problem and drift helplessly to disaster. They seem to have lost the capacity to think or act, and perhaps that is the surest sign of the decay of the British ruling classes, which have so long wielded power and controlled the Empire. Their attitude to India cannot be considered by itself; it is part of their general world policy. A support of fascism in Europe does not fit in with the establishment of a free, democratic State in India. If the latter was aimed at it would mean the liquidation of British Imperialism the world over, the strengthening of democracy in England, and an unrelenting opposition to fascism and all it stands for. It would

mean the end of Governments like the one under which England has the misfortune to suffer today.

It is clear, therefore, that under existing circumstances the British Government will not adopt the first course mentioned above. They will incline more towards the second course, and yet they will hesitate to adopt it and will try to find some middle way. That middle way is to aggravate some of our internal problems so that we may weaken and be in a mood to compromise with them. If it fails then, subject to the international situation and several other factors, they will adopt the method of repression. Even so they will try to avoid a direct conflict, and will largely function through and behind various reactionary forces in India, notably the Indian Princes and the communalists. We see the development of this line of action today.

The establishment of the Congress Ministries in a large number of the Provinces has brought new problems to the front. They have increased the Congress prestige and organizational power and have enormously activized the masses, both peasants and workers. Some legislation has been passed in favour of the peasantry and the industrial workers, and many of their burdens have been removed; but the result has not always come up to their expectations. Vital economic problems press for solution, and they can only be tackled in a small and sometimes ineffective way, as the power to deal with them fundamentally is lacking under the present Constitution with its numerous reservations and safeguards for existing vested interests. Thus social cleavages are appearing, and these have a tendency to disrupt the national movement. They will probably not result in any disruption, for the sense of unity for the political objective of independence is very great. Foreign observers, used to bitter class conflicts, are astonished at the way the Congress has held together and effectively disciplined in a single movement various classes and groups whose interests conflict with one another.

The Hindu-Muslim problem has during the past year and a half assumed a new aspect, and is undoubtedly

obstructing political progress. It is largely psychological, due to an apprehension in the minds of the Muslims that, under a democratic system, they might be ignored by a Hindu majority. The problem is a serious one and, because of its psychological basis, difficult to tackle. And yet it has no deep roots and it must not be confused with the conflicts of nationalities in Europe. For the vast majority of Muslims and Hindus are of the same races, with much the same customs and language. The increasing importance of economic problems, which affect both alike, is the surest way of liquidating this problem. Meanwhile a tactful and generous approach will help in toning it down.

The Indian States have rather suddenly come into the centre of the national political struggle, and their people are astir from Kashmir in the north to Hyderabad and Travancore in the south. In many States active struggles, involving civil disobedience, are proceeding. In some, popular victories have already been won. The most noticeable feature of these struggles is the part the British Government is playing in crushing the popular movement and bolstering up the feudal princes. Indeed, it has become obvious that the real resistance comes either from the British Government or British officers employed by the States. The princes count for little. The Congress had for long adopted a cautious policy in regard to the States, but with this new development it is taking a much more active part and, in particular, is opposing British interference and support of the old feudal order. It is quite possible that this conflict might spread from the States to the rest of India and become a major national conflict, involving even the Congress Ministries in the Provinces.

Provincial Autonomy came nearly two years ago and already it seems to have largely exhausted its potentialities. Federation is yet far off. The Federal part of the Constitution of 1935 is wholly rejected by the Congress and even by the Muslim League, and if it is sought to impose it, it will certainly be resisted. The Viceroy and the British Ministers say that it is coming, but they go on postponing

it for fear of the conflict that seems inevitable.<sup>1</sup> They still hope that some compromise might be arrived at, but there is likely to be none on the basis of this Federation or anything like it. Recent developments in the States also make it exceedingly unlikely that this federation will ever function in India.

Thus India presents today a strange picture of the Provinces under Congress Governments co-operating in many matters with the British Government but with frequent friction between them, of a continuing background of hostility between the national movement and British Imperialism, of major problems all heading for a crisis and a conflict. But the long shadow of Europe reaches us here and affects our movement as well as British policy towards us, and what happens in the world outside will greatly influence events in India. And so India looks at the world anxiously and with deepest interest and prepares for the day when she might have to make great decisions.

<sup>1</sup> The Federal structure, as proposed in the 1935 Act, which Congress and lesser groups would have resisted by direct action if it had been attempted to impose it, can now be regarded as still-born.

*January 25, 1939.*

*Congress and the War:*  
*The Working Committee's Statement,*  
*September 14, 1939<sup>1</sup>*

I. CLEARING THE DECKS

DURING the last six weeks much has happened in India. Soon after the outbreak of the war various individuals, high and not so high, expressed their opinions on Nazi aggression, and there was widespread condemnation of it. There was also considerable sympathy for the Polish people in their sad plight. Mahatma Gandhi spoke forcibly and other leaders condemned Nazi aggression. It is evident that the British authorities were greatly relieved by these various statements and came to the conclusion that India could be taken for granted in anything they did in connection with the war or in this country. They did not realize that our condemnation of Naziism and of the invasion of Poland could not alter our established policy of opposition to imperialism, and the latter, perforce, continued. They did not appreciate that Congressmen have developed a certain discipline among themselves and, in courtesy to their colleagues and in deference to their organization, they refrain from giving pointed expression to their individual views on vital matters which involve action. They forgot that we have cultivated a habit of being moderate in language but strong in any action that we might decide upon. In particular, they have not, in spite of a quarter of a century's experience, understood that behind the friendliness and courteous approach of Gandhiji there is the man of steel who does not bend on any vital matter affecting India's freedom.

Then came the Congress Working Committee's state-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B 1, p. 410.



ment of September 14 crystallizing nationalist opinion and giving clear expression to it. That statement immediately evoked a remarkable response in India. What innumerable people had been feeling vaguely in their minds and hearts was clarified and put down in stately language. Doubts were resolved, many a perplexity vanished, for it seemed that the people of India had found voice and pointed to the world the inevitable path which had to be followed if our present-day problems were to be solved. And the world listened in spite of attempts of censors and the like to suppress this remarkable appeal. The progressives in England hailed it; in democratic America it received considerable publicity; even in war-ridden Europe it evoked a response. People of suppressed and subject nations saw in it a charter for the oppressed. It was in tune with the spirit of the times.

All that has happened since then has been a logical development of that invitation of the Congress Working Committee for a clarification of war aims. Lord Zetland's speech; the A.I.C.C. meeting, the Viceroy's statement, the Muslim League's resolutions, the House of Commons' debate, and now the war resolutions in the Provincial Assemblies and the inevitable resignations of the Congress Ministries,<sup>1</sup> have all followed each other in ordered sequence, throwing a flood of light on the Indian scene.

What does this light show us? First of all, the high statesmanship and wisdom of the Congress, which stands justified today before India and the world. Holding to its ideals and its previous declarations, it has applied them to changing and difficult circumstances, and thus demonstrated that it has the capacity to be idealistic and practical at the same time. The freedom of India, for which it stands, has been woven into the larger picture of world freedom and war and peace aims, and a practical solution offered for the world's ills.

Secondly, the true nature of this war has become evident. The reply of the British Government to the

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information see "Congress and War Crisis," published by J. B. Kripalani, A.I.C.C., Allahabad.

Congress shows, beyond a doubt, that they are moved now, as before, by a desire to preserve their imperialist interests. This is no democratic war in which the forces of democracy are ranged on one side against the forces of Naziism and reaction on the other. True, there are some democratic forces on the side of the Allies, but the Governments that control the destinies of England and France are the old discredited Governments which must bear responsibility for the present unhappy state of Europe. We cannot forget Munich and Spain. Today the French Government is a citadel of reaction, and need we say more about the British Government than that Mr. Neville Chamberlain is still the Prime Minister? We knew all this. And yet it was necessary that all doubt should be removed from the minds of the people and that reality should emerge out of the fog of war.

That reality has come, and it is not beautiful to look at, and not all the fine phrasing of Sir Samuel Hoare can rejuvenate the aged and the decrepit. Imperialism is a tottering structure today, wholly out of place in modern conditions, but the British ruling class still think in its terms and seek to preserve it. They are even afraid to make a clear declaration about India's freedom. This Imperialism is not in love with the minorities or even the Princes (though it utilizes both to serve its main purpose); it is mainly concerned with British financial and other vested interests in India.

It is an axiom of Indian politics that there can be no compromise between imperialism and Indian nationalism and freedom. Whatever the phase of our struggle, that hostility has persisted. The Congress offer was that imperialism should be ended, the independence of India recognized, and thus age-long hostility should give place to friendship and co-operation between the two countries. That offer has been rejected, and we go our separate ways till fate or circumstance unites us again.

Thirdly, the position of the Muslim League has been cleared up beyond any possibility of misunderstanding. We had welcomed the League's acceptance of indepen-

dence as its objective three years ago and the widening of the basis of its membership. But we were soon to realize that the old politically reactionary outlook still held the field. Under cover of communal propaganda the Muslim masses were prevented from realizing this. We are not for the moment discussing the communal demands of the League. They may be right or wrong. It is conceivable for a person to be a communalist and yet an ardent believer in political freedom, though at some stage or other a conflict will arise between these two loyalties. The Congress has often erred in the petty issues of politics; but it has always shown an unerring instinct whenever a major issue arose. The League, on the other hand, has a remarkable record of being wrong on the major issues, though it may occasionally be right on some trivial matter.

It is a tragedy that at this supreme crisis in our national history the League should have sided with full-blooded reaction. We do not believe that many of its own members agree with this attitude. We are certain that the Muslim masses are firm adherents of Indian freedom. In some communal matter the League may represent them, but it certainly does not do so in matters political.

The curtain falls. The Congress Ministries go out. In all the flood of oratory in the U.P. Assembly<sup>1</sup> there was the background of conflict between progress and reaction. The enthusiasm at the end gave us a glimpse of the true feeling of the U.P. and of the temper of its people. We have cleared the decks and await the action that may be demanded of us.

*October 31, 1939.*

## 2. THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG OF IT

For several days we lived in an air of mystery and picked up titbits of news and anticipations of the doings of the High Commands<sup>2</sup> and the men of note who had gathered in New Delhi. And now we have had a spate

<sup>1</sup> At the last meeting of the Assembly, when it passed a resolution supporting the Congress. The Prime Minister moved the resolution.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to Indian political leaders.

of information—letters and statements and even a radio broadcast by the Viceroy. His Excellency has spoken and written in moving terms, and yet he will forgive us, we hope, if we are not moved overmuch by his statement. We are bad boys, we are told, who will not compose our differences in spite of every attempt of the British Government and every appeal addressed to us by the Viceroy. We have our faults and our failings, as we are only too painfully aware, but must we consider the British Government the white angel of peace that it claims to be? We have some experience of this Government, stretching over an odd hundred and eighty years, and it is hard to forget this. We have some knowledge of how the communal question took shape in India and was nurtured, and grew and grew, under the benign influence of successive Viceroy and Governments. It is evident that the old tradition still holds and finds expression in British policy in India. The Viceroy has spoken, so has the Marquis of Zetland and Sir Samuel Hoare, and others of high or low degree, not forgetting his Lordship of Salisbury, who has shown a worthy interest in the "primitive tribes" of India. Through all these utterances runs the old idea of the White Man's Burden and of British statesmen and administrators grappling with the internal troubles of this unhappy land.

What happened in Delhi? The Viceroy met Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Rajendra Prasad, and Mr. Jinnah and put forward a proposal that if they could agree about the provinces the problem of the Centre could be tackled with greater ease. It would appear that the Viceroy looked upon the crisis as something that had taken place between Mr. Jinnah and the Congress, with which he had no direct concern except in the capacity of a benevolent arbitrator. What exactly had happened in the provinces which required adjustment? The Congress Governments had resigned, but they did not resign on any communal issue. They resigned because of British policy, with which they did not agree and from which they wished to dissociate themselves. The conflict was with the British Government.

What, then, were Shri Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Jinnah to decide in regard to the Provincial Governments? If Mr. Jinnah controlled British policy and could speak on its behalf, he might have been able to help. But he is himself an opponent and critic of that policy and has his own grievances against the British Government. What, then, was to be done about the Provincial Governments? It is beyond our capacity to understand what the Viceroy expected from his visitors, unless we presume that he has not followed or understood recent developments.

There has seldom been such widespread resentment in India as was noticed when British policy was stated by the Viceroy two weeks ago.<sup>1</sup> Apart from a few individuals who, however eminent, have no representative character, everyone reacted strongly against that statement. The Muslim League, let us remember, did not approve of it; the Hindu Mahasabha criticized; even the Liberal Federation was unkind to it. The Congress reaction was the strongest of all and resulted in the resignation of the Congress Governments.

And yet, in spite of all this, the Viceroy meets our leaders and, ignoring everything, asks them to go ahead with the Provincial Governments. If there were not tragedy behind all this, we would be inclined to appreciate the humour of it. But it is tragic that His Excellency should endeavour to play this rôle and imagine that we can be made to play fast and loose with our innermost convictions and with our firm resolves. It is still more tragic to realize that not all the catastrophic changes that have happened and are happening in Europe have effected the complacency of the British ruling class or made it think in terms other than those of divide and rule. But the area of catastrophe moves east, and complacency and self-deception will not stop its progress.

It is clear that the conflict in Delhi was centred round the declaration of war aims and Indian freedom that the Congress demanded and the British Government was not prepared to make. That was the straight issue, and it should have been faced frankly and in a straightforward

<sup>1</sup> Viceroy's statement, October 18, 1939. (See "India and the War" H.M.S.O. London.)

manner. Till this is settled satisfactorily everything else is subsidiary. Till this "main and moral" obstruction is removed there can be no resumption of office by Congress Ministries nor any co-operation with the British Government. Till then we dissociate ourselves completely with British policy and war effort.

Let us also be clear in our minds that there is no obstruction on the Indian side to such a declaration. The Muslim League may not agree with us in some matters, but the League stands for independence and Indian freedom. Mr. Jinnah, so far as we know, approves of such a declaration, though he may not attach the same importance to it as we do. The Congress President has made it clear that the Constituent Assembly that we demand "will be formed on the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation." Further, "that there must be full protection of minority rights and interests, and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned." That surely removes every vestige of apprehension from the minds of minorities. There will be many difficult matters for us to consider and settle, but the principles are firmly established and agreed to. There is no major communal difficulty about the framing of India's Constitution by such a Constituent Assembly.

And so the whole fabric of communal disunion as a bar to India's progress, conjured up by the Viceroy, fades away and vanishes at the touch of reason and reality. The only reality that counts today is Britain's carrying on a war which becomes more and more imperialistic and her refusal to declare her war aims explicitly. With this knowledge, we have made our decision, and by that we shall stand.

— November 6, 1939.

### 3. STATEMENT ISSUED TO THE PRESS

The Viceroy's statement issued last night has surprised me, as it conveys an entirely different impression of what transpired in Delhi from what I had gathered from con-

tact with some of the principal parties concerned. From the statement it would appear that the question to be considered was a communal one, and he adds that "there remains today entire disagreement between representatives of the major political parties on fundamental issues." This seems to me an entire misapprehension of the situation, and I am not aware of any such disagreement on fundamental issues. But there is a fundamental disagreement between the Congress and the British Government, and it was because of this that the Viceroy's proposals could not be considered by us. The question before us was a political one, and as such it was considered by all of us. It was agreed between Mr. Jinnah and me that the communal question should be discussed fully by us at an early date. This did not affect the Viceroy's proposals so long as the political difficulty was not got over. Hence it was not discussed in this connection.

The crisis has arisen over a political issue—namely, the European war and the declaration of India as a belligerent country. The Congress Working Committee asked for a statement of war aims and how these were going to be applied to India. Subsequently a declaration was made by the British Government through the Viceroy, and this was considered entirely unsatisfactory. As a result of this the Congress felt that it could not associate itself with the war and called upon Congress Governments to resign. These resignations were offered, and in some cases have already been accepted. All this had nothing to do with the communal situation.

The Viceroy then suggests that the Congress and League should come to an agreement in regard to the Provincial field, consequent on which proposals for the Centre would be considered. This suggestion, howsoever desirable at any other time, had no application to the present situation, as we had voluntarily retired from the Provincial field because of disagreement with the British Government on vital matters of policy. Our withdrawal from the Provincial Governments was in no way due to a communal conflict.

It was surprising, therefore, that the Viceroy should forget or ignore the basic issue and take our co-operation with Britain for granted, subject to minor changes. As Shri Rajendra Prasad has stated in his letter, "both Mahatma Gandhi and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about the clarification of war aims, without which it was impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal."

It must be remembered that this clarification does not affect the communal problem, and the proposal for a Constituent Assembly, as amplified by Shri Rajendra Prasad, in his interview with and letter to the Viceroy, also overcomes any communal objection. Does the Viceroy imagine that Mr. Jinnah or the Muslim League are opposed to such clarification or to the declaration of India as a free country? If so, I fear he is very much mistaken. I found, to my pleasure, that in regard to objectives Mr. Jinnah and I had a great deal in common. He did not entirely agree with our approach to the political problem, and so we decided to send separate answers to the Viceroy. Our talks removed many misapprehensions and brought us much nearer to each other than we have been for some years past. I am convinced that such differences as exist, politically or communally, can be and will be got over. Even during the last week it was not any differences between Mr. Jinnah and us that came in the way, but the fundamental difference between the British Government and us. Let there be no mistake about this. No one stands in the way of an unequivocal declaration of war aims and India's freedom by the British Government except themselves. Till such a satisfactory declaration is made other issues do not arise and we cannot associate ourselves in any way with British policy. To drag the communal question into this straight issue is to befog people's minds and divert them into wrong channels.

*November 6, 1939.*



## 4. WHICH WAY? WHAT MEANS?

Again we are standing on the threshold of great happenings. Again our pulses quicken and our toes are a-quiver, and the old call comes to our ears. We pack up our little troubles and store away our domestic worries, for what do they matter when that call comes to make us forget all else when India, whom we have loved and sought to serve, whispers to us and casts her magic spell on our little selves?

Yet some are impatient and in the pride of their youth they make accusation. Why this delay? Why do we go so slow when the blood tingles in our veins and life calls to us to march? Do not worry, young manhood and womanhood of India; do not fret or grow impatient. The time will come all too soon when you will have to shoulder this heavy burden; the call to march will also come, and the pace may be swifter than you imagine. For the pace is set today by a world rushing headlong into the unknown future, and none of us, whether we wish it or not, can stand when the very ground shakes underneath our feet.

The time will come. May it find us ready, stout of heart and swift of limb and calm of mind and purpose. May we know well then the path we have to travel so that no doubts might assail us, no divided counsels weaken our resolve.

We know our goal, our objective, our heart's desire. Of that there need be no further argument. But what of the way we have to travel, the methods we adopt, the means that govern our actions? Surely that, too, is not a matter for argument; for long years we have blazed the trail and fashioned the way so that others may follow on the well-trodden path. Twenty years ago many might have doubted the efficacy of this strait and narrow way, but today we have long experience to guide us, our own successes and failures to teach us. In spite of attempts to divert us from it, we have stuck to it with firm resolve, and the millions of India have understood its significance

and efficacy and are wedded to it as never before. The Congress continues to declare its firm faith in it; for it there is no other way.

And yet it is necessary that we do not take too much for granted, and that in this hour of destiny we examine afresh its implications and accept them with all our heart and mind. This is no time for theory or idle speculation; action awaits us and action demands concentration of mind and effort and cannot permit the philosophy of doubt or the luxury of debate in the midst of action. Much less can it permit individuals or groups to neutralize that very action by their contrary methods and by their challenging the very roots of that action.

It is necessary that we examine this question frankly and come to clear and final decisions, for a new generation has arisen which has no roots in our past experience and speaks a different language, and there are some who openly or secretly, and from even the shelter of our organization, express contempt for our methods and means. It may be, as we well believe, that these doubters and dissidents are few and cannot make much difference to a vast nation-wide movement. But it is possible that they might produce confusion in many minds and lead to happenings which injure our cause. Therefore there must be clarity and decision. We can take no unnecessary risks in the struggle ahead of us.

Nineteen years ago the Congress adopted non-violence as its method of action, and in these years that have passed we have experimented with it on many an occasion. We impressed the world, but, what is more important, we impressed ourselves and drew amazing strength from what we did and how we did it. The old choice of a subject people—submission or violent revolt—no longer applied to us. We had a potent weapon, the value of which grew with our growing strength and understanding of it. It was a weapon which might be used anywhere, but it was peculiarly suited to the genius and present condition of India. Our own example is there to justify it and to comfort and cheer us. But world events

during the past few years have demonstrated the futility and brutality of the methods of violence.

Few of us, I suppose, can say that the era of violence is over or is likely to end soon. Today violence flourishes in its intensest and most destructive and inhuman form, as never before. Yet its very virulence is a sign of its decay. It will die or it will kill a good part of the world.

*The sword, as ever, is a shift of fools  
To hide their folly.*

But we live in an age of folly and madness, and our rulers and those who govern human affairs are the true products of this age. From day to day we face this terrible problem: how to resist violent aggression? For the alternative is often no other than meek submission and surrender to evil. Spain resisted with violence, and, though she succumbed in the end, her people set a magnificent example of courage and heroic endurance. Forsaken by their friends, they checked for two and a half years the tide of Fascist aggression. Who will say, even today after their defeat, that they were wrong? For they had no other honourable course left open to them. The method of non-violence was not in their minds and was, under the circumstances, out of their reach. So also in China.

Czecho-Slovakia, with all her armed might and undoubted courage, succumbed without a fight. True, she did so because her friends betrayed her. But still the fact remains that all her armed might proved of no avail to her in her time of need. Poland was utterly vanquished in three weeks of struggle, and her great army and fleets of aeroplanes vanished into nowhere.

The way of violence and armed might is only feasible today, even in the narrowest interpretation of immediate success, when the armed forces are superior or equal to those opposed to them. Otherwise there is surrender without a fight or a collapse after the briefest of struggles, bringing utter defeat and demoralization in their train. Petty violence is completely ruled out, as it has not even

the virtue of holding out a bare possibility of success, and it brings all the horrors of defeat and disruption.

What the future will bring to India is beyond our ken. If that future is still one of armed national forces, it is difficult for most of us to conceive of a free India without a national army and all the other apparatus for defence. But we need not consider that future now. We have to deal with the present.

In this present these doubts and difficulties do not arise, for our course is clear and our path marked out. This is the way of non-violent resistance to all obstructions to Indian freedom, and there is no other way. Let us be quite clear about it, for we dare not proceed to action with our minds being pulled in different directions. I am not aware of any other way offering us a ghost of a chance of effective action. Indeed, there will be no real action at all if we think of other ways.

I believe there is general agreement among Congressmen on this question. But there are a few, somewhat new to the Congress, who, while apparently agreeing, plan differently. They realize that there can be no national and nation-wide movement except through the Congress. All else would be adventurism. They want, therefore, to utilize the Congress and at the same time to break through it in directions which are opposed to Congress policy. The proposed technique is to embed themselves in the Congress and then to undermine its basic creed and method of action. In particular, the continuance of the technique of non-violence is to be combated, not obviously and patently, but insidiously and from within.

Now it is open to any Indian to put forward his own proposals and ideas, to work for them and convert others to his viewpoint, and even to act up to them if he thinks that it is vital to do so. But it is not open to him to do so under cover of something else. That would be misleading the public, and out of such deception mass movements do not arise. That would be treachery to the Congress and sabotage of a movement in full flood. If there is ideological conflict, it is all to the good that this should

see the light of day and the people should understand it and decide. This should be so at any time, much more so on the eve of great happenings. No organization can tolerate internal sabotage when it is thinking in terms of coming to grips with a powerful adversary. We cannot have indiscipline in our own ranks or a division of counsel when action calls us.

It becomes essential for us, therefore, to decide this issue with all clarity and definiteness. We have, of course, decided it so far as the Congress is concerned, and we propose to hold by that decision. Any other course is ineffective and fraught with peril to the nation. It is not difficult for us, if we were so minded, to produce chaos in India, but out of chaos freedom does not necessarily, or even usually, emerge. In India there are obvious possibilities of chaos, leading to the most unfortunate of consequences. We cannot always predict the consequences of our action, especially when we are dealing with the masses. We take risks and must take them. But it would be inconceivable folly to do something which adds to these risks enormously, puts obstructions in the way to our freedom, and takes away that moral stature from our movement which has been our pride these many years. When the world is a-wearying of the methods of violence, for us even to think of a reversion to them would be tragedy indeed.

We must therefore stick, stoutly and wholeheartedly, to the method of non-violence and reject all substitutes that might be offered to us. We must remember that it is not possible to have a variety of methods functioning side by side, for each weakens and neutralizes the other. We must, therefore, choose wisely and abide by our choice, not spoiling it by flirtation with other ways. Above all, we must realize that non-violence is non-violence. It is not just a word to be used mechanically when our minds function differently and our mouths utter other words and phrases opposed to it and our actions belie it. We have to be true to it in every way if we are to be just to it, to ourselves, and to our cause.

*November 15, 1939.*

## *India's Demand and England's Answer*

THE war in Europe grips our attention, for whether we are in it or out of it, our future depends so much on its outcome. For the moment our attention is diverted from the tragic struggle in the Far East, yet we know that this struggle is of essential significance and what happens in China will affect us all. So also in India, though here there is no obvious or external struggle in progress at present. For China and India will have a powerful effect on the shape of things to come, whatever that ultimate shape might be. This is not only because of the vast numbers of human beings that live in these two countries—between 800 and 900 millions; not only because of their rich and tremendous past heritage; but because of their enormous resources and potential political and economic strength. There is much talk of a new order and of world co-operation. There can be no stable order or effective co-operation in the world if China and India are ignored, and relatively weak though they might be today, they are not so weak as to submit to any such treatment.

As an Indian, the future of India and her people is of tremendous importance to me, but the real significance of the Indian problem lies in its relation to the world problem. For the Indian's problem is part of the world problem, and neither can be considered fully or understood apart from the other. Even in the present war in Europe, India can make a difference.

It is right and proper, therefore, that what happens in India should attract attention in the United States of America and that they should seek to understand India's problems in relation to the world, for on them ultimately will fall the burden of the future, whether they will it or not. Their great material resources and dominating position in the world have cast this burden on them today, but

even more so has this responsibility been cast upon them because of their leadership of the forces of democracy. If, in the words of President Roosevelt, the American people are going to "keep ablaze the flames of human liberty, reason, democracy, and fair play," they will have to throw their weight on the side of liberty and democracy in other parts of the world also, so that out of present-day chaos and violence, real peace and freedom might emerge. Peace is indivisible, it has been said; so is freedom, and there will be no enduring equilibrium unless it spans the world and is based on peace and freedom.

As India has grown in strength and self-reliance and approached the gates of freedom, she has thought of herself more and more as a part of a larger order, and has considered her own problem as a part of the world problem. In recent years there has been the greatest interest and even anxiety in India in regard to happenings in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, Palestine, and Central Europe. Indians have begun to develop an international outlook, and though they have been passionately attached to Indian independence, they have viewed it not as isolation but in terms of co-operation in a world order.

It was because of this that we followed events in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere closely, and as the prospect of a second world war approached the Indian Congress laid down its policy in regard to it. We had bitter memories of the war of 1914-18 and what followed it. In that war India's help had been considerable, over 1,200,000 men being sent to various theatres of war. All manner of promises were held out to us about the future status of India. What really followed was intense repression, martial law in the Punjab and the famous Amritsar massacre.<sup>1</sup> Out of all this the

<sup>1</sup> In 1919, at Amritsar, an unarmed crowd of men, women, and children, meeting in a public square bounded on three sides by walls, was fired on by the Regular Army. The troops were under the command of General Dyer, and the gunfire was directed by British officers. It is estimated that 370 were killed and 1,200 wounded. These are official estimates.

The event known as the Massacre of Amritsar, and even now referred to in official documents and circles as the "Amritsar

non-co-operation movement of Mr. Gandhi was born, and for the past twenty years the struggle for Indian freedom has gone on, peacefully but effectively and on a mass scale. That struggle would have come in any case, for the time was ripe for vital changes in India and both political and economic problems demanded them insistently. The war and its aftermath brought matters to a head; we saw how Indian men and resources had been exploited for the strengthening and furtherance of British imperialism.

So, as early as 1927, the Congress declared that the Indian people could not permit the exploitation of Indian resources for the furtherance of imperialist aims and that they would not co-operate in any imperialist war. Year

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Riots," caused great indignation in India and roused some feeling among the people of this country when the facts became known several months afterwards. Censorship kept the British public ignorant. Congress appointed a committee of inquiry, the report of which is even now a proscribed publication. The Committee found that the casualties were much greater than the figures published.

The shooting and the callous conduct afterwards was followed by a period of martial law, during which the Indian population were subjected to great cruelty and unspeakable humiliation. For instance, Indian leaders were taken prisoner and put in cages too small for them to stand erect, and made to march in fetters in the hot sun. Then there was the "crawling order," under which Indians, passing a certain point in a street where a certain Miss Sherwood was alleged to have been assaulted, were obliged to crawl on their bellies. The martial law régime was apparently intended to terrorize the people, as was the purpose, admitted by General Dyer, of the Amritsar shooting.

A Parliamentary Commission presided over by Lord Hunter and containing only one Indian, found General Dyer guilty of an "error of judgment." The House of Lords passed a vote of confidence in General Dyer, while a public memorial fund launched by British Conservatives in this country subscribed £20,000, and a sword was presented to General Dyer.

The Massacre of Amritsar preceded the introduction of the Constitutional reforms embodied in the Government of India Act, 1919.

The site of the massacre, Jallanwalla Bhag, has now been purchased by the nation and is a national memorial. "Jallanwalla Bhag Day," April 14, is observed all over India. Few events in recent Indian history have created such a wave of public feeling in India as this massacre.



after year this policy was reiterated and developed. With the growth of the Nazi Power, the Congress condemned Fascism and Naziism and disapproved of their theory and practice. We approved of collective security to check aggression and noticed that British policy, in spite of occasional declarations to the contrary, was deliberately sabotaging this idea, on which the League of Nations had been based, and was often encouraging aggression. Munich came as a terrible shock and the so-called non-intervention and betrayal of Spain was a tragedy which affected us deeply.

These events gave shape to the external policy of the National Congress. While on the one hand we disapproved of Fascism and Naziism, we dissociated ourselves entirely from British foreign policy and made it clear again that we could be no parties to a war imposed upon us and for imperialist ends. Any such imposition would be opposed and resisted. But the British Government has meanwhile amended the existing Indian Constitution so as to concentrate all power, in the event of a war emergency, in the hands of the irresponsible Central Government, which they controlled completely. The powers of the Provincial Governments were made subject to the direction and control of the Central Government at its discretion, and provincial autonomy and ministerial responsibility were thus reduced to a farce. The measure met with strenuous opposition.

In August, 1939, Indian troops were sent abroad to Egypt and Malaya without any reference to the Central or Provincial Assemblies. As a protest against this, the Congress withdrew all its members from the Central Assembly and again warned the British Government of the consequences of dragging India into a war without the consent of the Indian people.

In spite of all this, India was declared a belligerent country immediately on the outbreak of the war in Europe, and the Indian Constitution Amending Bill was rushed through the British Parliament within a few minutes. This was deeply resented, and ordinarily the Congress

would have been justified in following up its previous decisions by advising the Indian people to abstain from the war. Apart from these developments, we could not conceive that Mr. Neville Chamberlain's Government, in spite of its professions, could stand or work for democracy and freedom. At the same time we did not want a Nazi victory, and our sympathies were entirely on the side of the victims of aggression.

The Congress thereupon, on September 14, 1939, issued a long statement on the war crisis, in which it made it clear that if the war was to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests, and privilege, then India could have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue was democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India was intensely interested in it. She could not support imperialism or fascism in any form, but she would throw her weight on the side of democracy provided that democracy functioned in India also. It was manifestly absurd for a subject India to become the champion of liberties abroad which were denied to her. The Congress therefore invited the British Government to declare their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that was envisaged, and, in particular, how these aims were going to apply to India and were going to be implemented at the present. A declaration of Indian independence was asked for and the recognition of the right of the Indian people to frame their own Constitution through a Constituent Assembly, without external interference.

It was in no spirit of bargaining that this claim was put forward. It was the inevitable outcome of our long struggle for freedom, and it was the essential preliminary to any effort to make the war popular in India. We have a background of a hundred and fifty years of conflict between Indian nationalism and British imperialism. It is not easy to get rid of it. England may be partly democratic at home; to us in India she appears in imperialist garb only, and we have suffered under this imperialism for many generations now. Her recent policy,

both in India and abroad, has only strengthened our conviction that her outlook is still completely imperialist. It was only by a full declaration of Indian independence that the great psychological barrier which separates India from England could be broken down. It was only then that the *bona fides* of England in this war could be established. Otherwise why should we be parties to imperialist adventures and allow our resources to be exploited for imperialist ends?

The answer that the British Government gave us demonstrated that our fears and apprehensions were fully justified. They refused to define their war or peace aims, and in regard to India, it was stated that "at the end of the war" His Majesty's Government "will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities, parties, and interests in India and with the Indian Princes with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in framing such constitutional modifications as may be deemed desirable." Among the interests and parties, it was made clear, were British financial and mercantile interests.

The war in Europe might shake up the world and the whole political and economic structure might be on the verge of collapse, but Whitehall still spoke in the old voice and language of British imperialism. We must wait till the end of the war, when Whitehall will decide. The elected representatives of the Indian people did not count; various odd groups would be consulted and then what was deemed desirable would emerge. Among the groups that must have their say were the Indian Princes and British vested interests, both of whom are completely opposed to the idea of Indian freedom. The Indian States, ruled by the Princes, are relics of a bygone medieval age where full-blooded autocracy, and often something like a feudal system, prevail. They would have vanished long ago if the British Government had not protected them. During recent years a people's movement has arisen in these States demanding freedom and democratic rights. This has been, and is being, crushed to the accompaniment of brutal re-

pression and gangster methods, which have nothing to learn from Nazi methods. The British Government has given full support to this repression in the States.

British financial, mercantile, and other vested interests are the strongholds of imperialist control and exploitation in India. It is ultimately on their behalf and for their sake that Britain controls India. To ask us to obtain the agreement of the Princes as well as British vested interests to any change, is to put a barrier which can never be surmounted. It means that the final decision about the liquidation of British imperialism must rest with that imperialism itself.

The British Government's answer was an affront to the people of India, who saw in it the desire to consolidate the imperialist régime in India and elsewhere. If this was so, the war in Europe became obviously a war of rival imperialisms, and India could be no party to it. Not only the Congress, but all groups and parties condemned this answer. The Congress decided that under these circumstances they could not associate themselves with the war and, as a first step in non-co-operation, they called upon the Provincial Governments to resign. Eight such governments resigned, and as it was not possible to have any other alternative popular governments to seven of these, the Constitution was suspended and the Governor became the autocrat. In the eighth province, Assam, a precarious Ministry was formed and its future is uncertain. So we have gone back to autocracy and completely irresponsible government.

Taken aback by the volume of resentment in India, the British Government made another approach and offered some seats in the Viceroy's Executive Council to popular representatives, whom the Viceroy would nominate. This was an attempt to buy up by high office some prominent leaders. It completely ignored the issues at stake and avoided a declaration about India's freedom. If the Congress had been foolish enough to accept this bait it could have been said with justice that it was bargaining for personal preferment. The offer was rejected.

Another significant move was fathered by the British Government. This was to shift public attention from the political problem to the communal problem. The problem which had assumed importance since the war was a purely political one—the freedom of India and the right of her people to frame their Constitution. The communal problem, though important in its own sphere, had nothing to do with it. The British Government, however, sought shelter in communal difficulties and made the agreement of certain reactionary communal groups and minorities a prerequisite for any further consideration of the political problem. The Indian Congress declared that it was prepared to go to any length to recognize and protect minority and communal rights and interests, provided that Indian unity, democracy, and freedom did not suffer. It could not satisfy, under any circumstances, those who were politically reactionary and opposed to the very conception of freedom and democracy. These reactionary groups, communal or Princely, have lined up now, as they have done in the past, behind British imperialism, to resist any change which will give power to the people.

The National Congress did not ask for any power or privileged position for itself. It demanded a declaration of India's independence and the framing of India's Constitution by a Constituent Assembly, freely elected under adult franchise. This Assembly would elect representatives to meet the representatives of the British Government for the settlement of all problems of mutual interest and for a treaty between two free nations. This was the obvious and only democratic procedure possible, in order to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole, giving full opportunity to all. Any other course would mean the imposition of the will of Britain or of some privileged groups in the country.

The question of the minorities or of different communities is worthy of consideration, but it has to be remembered that whatever the minority claims or objections might be, they cannot come in the way of a declaration of India's freedom by Britain. Such a declaration would

state the intention and decision of the British Government, and it does not come in the way of minority protection. Whitehall has, however, made the minority problem an excuse for making no declaration at all.

What is this minority problem in India? The word minority is misleading, as we are not dealing with racial minorities or nationalities as in Europe, but with religious groups usually of the same racial stock. The smaller religious groups are Christians, Sikhs (an offshoot from Hinduism), Parsees, etc. The main divisions are Hindus and Muslims, the former constituting about two-thirds of the entire population. The Muslims, though theoretically a minority in the whole of India, number eighty millions and are in a majority in five northern provinces. Under provincial autonomy they can, if they function communally or religiously, control these five provinces. The distribution of the population and the administrative areas is such that there is a balance, and it is hardly conceivable that either of the great communities, even if so inclined, can ignore the other or misbehave towards that other. If this happened there would immediately be repercussions in other parts of India.

It is absurd to imagine that these two huge religious groups are ranged against each other in the country, although it is unfortunately true that conflicts have taken place from time to time, chiefly in towns. There is a long history behind this, and a British policy, consistently followed, to encourage disruptive tendencies. While Indian nationalism has sought to unify India and has to a large extent succeeded, British imperialism has tried to introduce barriers to unity. One of the most unfortunate of these has been the introduction of separate electorates, each group voting separately for its own candidates. The result of this is the perpetuation of a feeling of separation and the encouragement in either group of the extremer communal and bigoted elements. This bigotry and communal feeling has often been exploited, and is being exploited, by political reactionaries to their own advantage.

In spite of all this, the National Congress has met with

considerable success in developing political unity of outlook and action. The Congress is open to all Indians who subscribe to the objective of Indian independence, without any religious or other distinction. It has, inevitably, a very large Hindu membership, but it has also hundreds of thousands of Muslims on its rolls. The North-West Frontier Province, which is 95 per cent. Muslim, is dominated by the Congress and had a Congress Muslim Ministry.

Both Hindus and Muslims have their own communal organizations, the Muslim organization being the All-India Muslim League. The Muslim League is controlled by reactionary politicians who have taken little or no part in the struggle for Indian freedom during the last twenty years, and who have often opposed it and sided with British imperialism. Apart from the Muslim League there are three other important Muslim organizations which are politically more advanced and which have often co-operated with the Congress, and which today entirely support the Congress demand for Indian independence and a Constituent Assembly.

The Congress has repeatedly laid down that the rights of all minorities must be fully protected by fundamental laws in the Constitution. Every conceivable minority right—religion, freedom of conscience, culture, language, etc.—could be thus protected, apart from other civic rights which will apply to everybody. Any infringement of such a right could be challenged in a supreme court.

In the demand for a Constituent Assembly, minority rights have been especially considered. The Assembly would be elected by adult suffrage, but to ensure that minorities can send the representatives of their own choice, they have been given the option to have separate electorates for the purpose, much as we dislike this separatist machinery. Further, it has been suggested that all questions directly affecting any minority's interests, as such, should be settled by agreement and not by the greater voting power of the majority. If such an agreement is not arrived at in regard to any particular point, it can be referred to arbitration to the League of Nations or the

International Court at The Hague or any other impartial body mutually agreed upon.

It passes the wit of man to devise further safeguards for a minority, but if any other expedients to ensure confidence in a minority or to protect its interests suggest themselves, the Congress will gladly consider them, for the Congress is anxious to settle this problem to the satisfaction of all. But nothing can be accepted which goes against Indian freedom or democracy or disrupts India. Nor can a minority be allowed to dominate or override the majority. After all, the majority has also some rights.

Our communal or minority problem would have been settled long ago if a third party had not been always there to play it up and holding all manner of political gifts in its hands. So long as British imperialism functions in India, it will be exceedingly difficult to arrive at a real communal settlement. The bid of the British Government can always be higher than that of the other party, and reactionary groups take advantage of this fact and barter away national freedom for apparent communal gains. It is for this reason that the Constituent Assembly has been suggested. Settlement of the communal problem will come about only when everyone realizes that this is the final authority, and no outsider can intervene. The pressure of events will then force a solution, for the alternative is internal conflict.

Stress has been laid on adult or near-adult franchise for the Constituent Assembly. Apart from political reasons for this, such a wide franchise is desirable even from the point of view of the communal problem. This problem is essentially a middle-class problem and does not affect the masses at all. If the members of the Constituent Assembly are elected by the masses, they will bring an economic outlook with them and will be more concerned with mass problems than with others. The Hindu and the Muslim peasant or worker or shopkeeper or artisan or business man has the same problems to face. He is not worried by communal or religious divisions in regard to his work or business. For this reason we are opposed to a restricted electorate which will be largely controlled by the communally



mind ed classes, intent on preserving their own narrow interests.

Objection is raised to adult franchise because this will give an enormous electorate in India and vast constituencies. This difficulty can be overcome by indirect election through electoral colleges.

The world is full of problems today and some of them, not finding solution, have led Europe into the dreadful holocaust of war. No problem is an easy one and each is tied up with so many others. None of us minimizes the difficulties we have to face in India, difficulties of our own creation or due to our own failings, besides those created by the British Government. But the Indian problem is yet capable of peaceful solution and keeping in view the larger problems of the world. That solution is, being hindered by reactionary elements in England and in India. Meanwhile the problem grows more serious, for behind it lie all manner of economic conflicts, the vast poverty of our country, the agrarian question, the feudal princely areas, the dominance of British vested interests. The tragedy is that Britain should have encouraged, and should continue to encourage, disruptive and reactionary tendencies in order to preserve her imperial interests. She will not preserve them for they are destined to go, but they will go in hostility and conflict if no better way is found. The day when India could submit to external impositions is past.

It was a brave offer made on behalf of India to England for a declaration of war aims and Indian independence. If that had been accepted in the spirit in which it was made, there would have been an end to generations of conflict and struggle between the two countries, and for the first time we would have had willing co-operation between equals. If England had accepted it, she would have startled the world and proved that she really stood for democracy and freedom. She would have gained a greater victory than any she can possibly achieve on the battlefield, and the moral backing of the world would have been with her.

But imperialisms die hard and British imperialism is

old and tough. It was too much to expect that Mr. Chamberlain's Government should liquidate it, even under stress of war. It is clear to us that this imperialism is functioning and is seeking to preserve itself. India will be no party to this and therefore she has dissociated herself from the war. We have taken the first step in non-co-operation, and though we have been in no hurry to take another step, events carry us inevitably towards further conflict.

Attempts will no doubt be made again by the British Government to come to terms with Indian nationalism. But they are foredoomed to failure unless they recognize that there are no half-way houses to Indian freedom, and that this can no longer be reconciled with British imperialism. That imperialism will have to be liquidated and India recognized as an independent country. Dominion status and the like have ceased to have significance and, in any event, they have no application to India. We have to think of the world in terms other than those of empire, whatever the degree of internal freedom it offers. If we have international co-operation, as we must, it has to be on a world scale. To that conception of international co-operation or world order India is fully attached and she would gladly associate herself with it.

In our struggle for freedom we have adhered to peaceful methods and have conceived of political action in moral terms, though we may have failed, often enough, in acting up to that conception. We have had misfortune enough in the world, but if even this war is to be carried on in the old imperialist way with no higher aims, if it results in no essential difference to the world or to human freedom, if it does not end the root causes of war and human degradation, then that will be tragedy indeed. India would gladly work to prevent this tragedy. It was in this spirit that we invited the British Government to state their aims. It is in this spirit also that we shall try to continue, even though our path leads to conflict with England. We would ill serve the cause we cherish by submitting to that every evil of imperialism against which we have struggled for so long.

*January 6, 1940.*

## *The Constituent Assembly*

I CAN understand, though I do not appreciate, the criticisms of those who differ from us fundamentally in politics; those whose ideas of Indian freedom are limited by the will and desire of the British Parliament; those who are afraid of revolutionary change; those who are terrified at the prospect of the masses marching along the stage of Indian politics. But it has surprised me greatly to find some—there are not many—among those who claim to be the most ardent champions of Indian independence who have also joined this band of critics.

I am convinced that there is no way out for us, if we aim at real democratic freedom, except through a Constituent Assembly. The alternatives are: (1) Continuation, in a greater or less degree, under the control of the British Parliament; (2) some kind of fascist or military dictatorship or dictatorships; (3) Soviet Communism in some parts of India with disruption and chaos in other parts; (4) complete disruption and chaos.

For my part, I would like to have a socialist economy all over India, and I think that the Soviet form of government, with certain variations and adaptations suited to India, may well fit in here. Thereby I do not mean that the Russian system or methods should be introduced here *in toto*. I think the Soviet system can be allied to a great deal of real democracy. But any attempt to introduce sovietism in India would, I am sure, now and for some time to come, lead to terrible conflicts and disruption.

Therefore, of necessity, I am led to the conclusion that the way of the Constituent Assembly is the only way. But let it be remembered that this way is not the way of advancing step by step to the haven of Dominion status. It means the creation of a new State; it means the walking out and away from the economic foundations and struc-

ture of imperialism. This cannot be done by the wisest of lawyers sitting together in conclave; it cannot be done by small committees trying to balance interests and calling that constitution-making; it can never be done under the shadow of an external authority. It can only be done effectively when the political and psychological conditions are present, and the urge and the sanctions come from the masses. Hence the vital importance of adult suffrage.

Are these political and psychological conditions present today? No, obviously not, or else we would have got the Constituent Assembly already. But I cannot say about tomorrow or the day after, for we live in dynamic and swiftly moving times and all manner of forces are at play.

Why do we ask the British Government for a Constituent Assembly? Strictly speaking, we are not asking for any gift. We are stating what we propose to have and are going to have some time or other. We shall have it when we are strong enough for it, no sooner, and probably after a struggle. But, then, are we to refrain from saying what we want and aim at, because for the moment we cannot attain it? Surely that is not even the way of preparation. And then it is never wise to rule out the odd possibility of our gaining it without a major struggle, for our strength and world events may force the pace. To envisage this possibility does us no harm, unless it leads us to complacency and surrender of the idea of struggle.

Why do we ask the British Government to acknowledge the independence of India? Does that make any difference? Of course it does, though it does not mean that we have gained our objective or that the British Government will not go back on their word. The mere fact that they refuse to acknowledge it, itself shows what value they attach to such a declaration. If there was such a clear declaration of Indian independence, of the right of the Indian people to frame their own Constitution through a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise and without any external interference, that in itself would create a psychological situation of revolutionary significance. That by itself will not take us to our goal but it will

strengthen us enormously and bring the masses into play.

The question of the Constituent Assembly is an acid test for all of us. It shows where each one of us stands. Britain refuses it because she will not give up her imperialism. The Liberals in India, or the Muslim League, or other protestants, oppose it because they do not want real independence, and they have no conception of a new State, or, if they can conceive of it, they dislike it. Howsoever much they might dislike things as they are, they prefer them to that new free State where the people can make or unmake. Hence the objections to adult suffrage, and even to large numbers of people being associated with this undertaking. Small committees of the elect are suggested whose chief function will be to move warily within the limits laid down by the British Government<sup>1</sup> and to discuss interminably communal claims and counter-claims.

That is not our idea of Indian freedom or the State that we seek to build.

<sup>1</sup> The British Government as categorically has rejected the demand for a Constituent Assembly and its basis, self-determination. In a speech at Manchester on November 20, 1941, the Secretary of State for India said: "Congress has demanded that the future constitution should be settled by a Constitutional Assembly elected by universal adult franchise over the whole of India. This is an impossible demand."

ALLAHABAD.

March 8, 1940.

## 5

### *The Parting of the Ways*

To say that anything has happened in India which leads to a parting of the ways as between Britain and India is incorrect. For their ways have been separate, as they were bound to be, so long as England was the dominating imperialist Power and India was subject to her will. Such a relation could only be based on coercion, and coercion cannot lead to a marching together hand in hand. It can only lead to the dominant party chaining and pulling the other and dragging it against its will, or to a breaking of this chain.

So our ways have lain in different directions and a continuous tug-of-war has resulted; sometimes the conflict has been psychological and wordy, sometimes it has been rebellion. In 1857 a bloody rebellion took place, and it was suppressed in a ghastly manner. The conflict continued, bitter and persistent, though it was not so obvious on the surface. It took shape in the organization of the National Movement, which spoke softly for a while, and then its voice grew harder as it came to represent the real feelings of the people. Another rebellion against the dominating authority took shape, a peaceful one, discarding all methods of violence, but more powerful and widespread than any previous one. The hundreds of millions of India, weary of their long subjection and poverty and exploitation, shed their fear and, looking the dominating imperialism in the face, demanded freedom.

There were many ups and downs, and much suffering and sorrow came to these millions, but there was no looking back for them. The conflict continued in various ways, and meanwhile the world rushed towards the abyss of self-destruction. India's problem began to be viewed in a larger perspective and in relation to the difficulties that encompassed the world. Though our vision became broader and deeper, and though it tried to peep into the

future, yet that problem remained essentially one of Indian Nationalism *versus* British Imperialism. India's freedom and independence were the perquisites for us in order to play our part in the larger world. And in that larger world, also, it seemed to us a sham and a mockery to talk of freedom and democracy and yet hold on to imperialism.

Fascism and Naziism were anathema to us and the horrors of Central Europe produced a powerful reaction on India. Yet we remembered—how can we ever forget?—the horrors we had witnessed in India. Yet we saw and felt, to the innermost core of our being, the day-to-day humiliation and exploitation of our own people. We were not wise or clever enough to understand that, though Fascism and Naziism were definitely bad, imperialism was not so bad after all.

War came in Europe, and we discovered that India had also been declared a belligerent country, without so much as a formal reference or intimation to any representatives of the people of India. The Congress might be considered an unofficial organization, but there was the Central Assembly,<sup>1</sup> there were the Provincial Governments enjoying, it was said, provincial autonomy. None of these was told or asked for its opinion.

The air resounded with loud cries invoking freedom and asserting the sanctity of democracy. They sounded good. But we had heard these cries so often before and experienced for ourselves the aftermath. We could not be easily swept away; we were cautious, doubly so because of the way in which the war had been imposed upon us, despite our repeated warnings. Was this freedom and democracy meant for us also or only for the favoured mortals who lived in Europe and its extensions? Did it mean that imperialism would end here and elsewhere?

We inquired from the British Government and asked to

<sup>1</sup> Two Houses of the Legislature at Delhi, both partially elected on a high property franchise and with other anti-democratic checks. The Indian Legislature is not sovereign and has no plenary powers. It is a debating body whose decisions do not bind the executive, and are, in fact, systematically disregarded.

be enlightened, so that we might decide what course we should pursue. Our inquiries were considered irrelevant and impertinent. Yet the answers that they gave indicated sufficiently clearly that there was no intention and, so far as they were concerned, no possibility of the ending of the imperialist structure in India, no question of power being transferred to the people's representatives. The National Congress had not asked anything for itself. It wanted no jobs in high places, which it could have had even without asking for them. It wanted a declaration of independence for India and a Constituent Assembly, elected by the people, to frame the Constitution of a free India, with full safeguards for the protection of all minority rights.

In the mind and heart of India there was a conflict. There was an intense dislike of Fascism and Naziism and no desire to see them win. If India could but be convinced that this war was being fought for a new world order, for real freedom, then indeed India would throw all her weight and strength into it. But imperialism and we were old acquaintances, very old, with many generations of contact. We knew each other, suspected each other, and disliked each other thoroughly. There was this background of one hundred and eighty years of hostility, of exploitation, of bitterness, of promises unfulfilled, of disruptive and reactionary movements encouraged, and attempts to break up the national unity of India. It was no easy matter for us to get over these tremendous hurdles or remove the complexes that had grown up. Yet we said we would do it, but we could not even attempt it unless a great psychological shock was given to the people, a pleasant shock, which would suddenly change the air of India and get rid of the fears and complexes. That pleasant shock could only come by an unequivocal declaration of independence and immediate steps to give effect to the popular will in the carrying on of the administration. Unless this were done, no man in India, no group, could make the people move in the direction of willing association with the war.

Wars today require mass support, and even authoritarian



countries have to whip up their people by ceaseless propaganda. No war can be fought effectively by a professional army in an atmosphere of public ill-will or indifference. So even from the narrower point of view of organizing India's defence or India's participation in the war effort, a popular representative Government was essential. Imperialism can coerce; it cannot win public approval and goodwill.

The Viceroy and the British Government said "No" to us, and our course seemed to be clear. The Congress Governments in the Provinces resigned,<sup>1</sup> and parliamentary government in these Provinces ceased because it was not prepared to submit to the British Government's fiat against the wishes of the people it represented. It was the old conflict between King and Parliament taking a new shape; the Viceroy and the Governors represented the King's Veto, our elected assemblies the will of the people. In Western Europe this conflict had raged hundreds of years ago and resulted in establishing the authority of Parliament. A king lost his head in the process in England; another king also lost his head in France. In America a proud and freedom-loving people resisted the authority of a distant King and his Ministers, and, after a long struggle, established their own freedom.

But in India, in the twentieth century, on the eve of the new order that was promised, in the face of loud declarations in favour of freedom and democracy, in India, parliamentary government, in so far as it existed in the Provinces, was suspended. The Viceroy's authority was supreme; he could make laws and unmake them, tax people and coerce them without the slightest reference to any representative body.

The Congress Ministries had resigned, it is true, though they had the great majority of the members of the Assemblies behind them. They resigned because they could not accept the Viceroy's mandates or the British Government's policy. But the Assemblies were still there. The Viceroy or the Governors could have dissolved them and had a

<sup>1</sup> In pursuance of the decision of the Working Committee of the Congress, October 22, 1939.

fresh election. But they knew well that such an election would result in an overwhelming majority in favour of the Congress Governments that had resigned. No other Ministry was possible, as it could not command a majority. So the only course was for the Provincial Assemblies to be suspended, without fresh elections, and the Viceroy and Governors to exercise dictatorial powers. It was a clear case of conflict between the people and Parliament on the one side and the King's representatives on the other. One party had to be suppressed or to give in. Parliament was suppressed. It was as if Mr. Neville Chamberlain, unable to carry Parliament with him, had advised the King to suspend it and to rule by decree; or President Roosevelt, in a like predicament, had ignored the House of Representatives and the Senate and constituted himself the dictator. We hear a great deal about authoritarianism and dictators, and England's chiefs condemn both in resonant and forcible language. Yet in India today there is full-blooded dictatorship and authoritarianism.

Our course was clear. Yet we restrained and held ourselves, even though many amongst us were indignant at this and even though many colleagues of ours found their way to prisons<sup>1</sup> for the offence of explaining our policy to the people. We were hesitant because we hoped against hope that England's Government, which now included some progressive and Labour elements, might, in this hour of trial, shake itself out of its deadening imperialism and act according to its professions. We had no desire to encourage the Nazi rulers in any way; the thought of their domination over Europe and elsewhere was a painful one. We who had suffered as a subject people knew well what this would mean for others. We, of all people, could not tolerate the racial views and racial oppression of the Nazis.

<sup>1</sup> Under the Defence of India Rules or certain sections of the Criminal Law, many persons have been imprisoned in India since the outbreak of the war for speeches and propaganda in support of Indian independence and for expounding the Congress attitude to the war. Before civil disobedience was launched in October, 1940, there were about 4,000 such prisoners.

The horror that enveloped Holland and Belgium, the supreme tragedy of France, deeply moved us. The imminent peril of England made us feel that we should not add to her difficulties and embarrassments. Though England's ruling classes may have treated us badly and her imperialism may have crushed us, we had no ill-will for her people, who were bravely facing peril and extreme danger. We tried hard to find a way out, honourable and advantageous to both India and England. We made new proposals, even going beyond our own mandate given at the last sessions of the Congress at Ramgarh.<sup>1</sup> We pledged ourselves for the organization of Indian defence and help in the war effort. But we could only do so as free people, with the goodwill and co-operation of India's millions. That freedom must be declared and a provisional national Government formed, which would represent not one party only but all the important elements. The fundamental basis for this proposal was the recognition that the imperialist structure had to go.

The Viceroy and the British Government have said a final "No" to us and to India. On the eve of the French collapse Britain's rulers were unorthodox enough to propose a union of England and France. That was an astonishing proposal. It came too late. But it showed that the British Government had got out of the ruts and could take a big step if the situation demanded it. But where their own interests are so vitally concerned, as in India, they still live in the ruts, and not all the shock of war and danger has taken them out. Even an obvious advantage in this war cannot make them give up the special position that imperialism has conferred upon them. They talk complacently still of their Empire and of their desire to maintain it, forgetting, perhaps, that the word, which sounds so good to them, is a symbol to us of our own subjection, degradation, and poverty.

I repeat that it is incorrect to say that there is any new

<sup>1</sup> The Resolution of the Congress at its annual session at Ramgarh laid down the policy to be pursued in regard to Indian independence. (See Appendix B 2, p. 414.)

parting of the ways, for our ways never lay together. But this declaration<sup>1</sup> of the British Government means the final breaking of such slender bonds as held our minds together, it means the ending of all hope that we shall ever march together. I am sorry; for, in spite of my hostility to British imperialism and all imperialisms, I have loved much that was England, and I should have liked to keep the silken bonds of the spirit between India and England. Those bonds can only exist in freedom. I wanted India's freedom for India's sake, of course; but I also wanted it for England's sake. That hope is shattered, and fate seems to have fashioned a different future for us. The way of co-operation is not before us; the hundred-year-old hostility will remain and grow in future conflicts, and the breach, when it comes, as come it must, will also not be in friendship, but in hostility.

I am told that the British Government has been led to believe that we shall tamely submit to their decrees because so far we have been quiescent. Our very restraint appears to have made them think that we were incapable of any action. In this world of force, of bombing aeroplanes, tanks, and armed men, how weak we are! Why trouble about us? But perhaps, even in this world of armed conflict, there is such a thing as the spirit of man, and the spirit of a nation, which is neither ignoble nor weak, and which may not be ignored, save at peril.

To those of us who are intimately connected with Indian politics the British Government's reply needs no analysis or clarification. To do them justice, it is clear enough and there is no ambiguity. Yet others, perhaps, might miss its significance and be misled by the use of resounding words into thinking that something worth while was offered, that the people of India were getting some power in her government.

It is proposed to appoint some non-official Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council. This Council is no real Executive or Cabinet; it is merely advisory. Real power rests with the Viceroy, who does not always take members

<sup>1</sup> August 8. (See Appendix B 5, p. 417.)

of his Council into his confidence. They are heads of departments, advising the Viceroy about their special subjects. All policy emanates from the Viceroy. In fact, his is the responsibility, and he is answerable to the Secretary of State for India in the British Parliament. If the Constitution remains unaltered both in law and convention, it makes little difference who or how many people are added to the Council. They do not make an atom of difference to the Viceroy's position, power, or authority, except in so far as they might try to influence him by their powers of persuasion.

Apart from this, the addition of a few non-officials to the Executive Council does not make an essential difference to it; the majority continues to be of the nominated official and service members, who may have their virtues (which are not very obvious), but who represent the hundred per cent. imperialistic bureaucratic type. They are completely dependent on the Viceroy for their position and are obsequious to him. They are wholly cut off from the life, thought, and activities of the people, and live in an official world of their own. Such efficiency as they have consists in running the old type of police State. They are remote from the modern world and its problems and do not understand them. They belong to an order which has passed elsewhere and which must pass in India.

Then, again, the so-called "representative Indians" who may be appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council will be chosen, presumably, from groups which are opposed to each other, some completely reactionary. All of them will not even represent the progressive elements in India, and in the Council they will either neutralize each other or strengthen officialdom. They will not be elected by the people in any way and will not be responsible to them. They will be chosen by the Viceroy in their individual capacity.

It is obvious that the addition of these few odd Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council means less than nothing from any national point of view, or from the viewpoint of any power being transferred to the people.

The second proposal is the creation of a War Advisory Council composed of an odd assortment of people, including some representatives of the semi-feudal Indian States. This will meet from time to time, apparently to listen to good advice and to act as recruiting sergeants and the like. They will have no executive power of any kind or, indeed, any other power. It will be just a show body of no relevance or importance.

These are the two proposals for the present, and, as the Viceroy has made perfectly clear, the British Government do not contemplate the transfer of any real power or definite responsibility. Further, it has been stated by the Secretary of State for India that when he refers to "the principal elements in India's national life," he includes the European vested interests in India. Probably the conception of India's national life that Mr. Amery and the Viceroy cherish is one which consists chiefly of British vested interests, Indian feudal princes, big landlords, communalists, and other reactionaries. According to them, these vested interests form the warp and woof of our national life and deserve protection and representation. The three or four hundred odd millions of people who live and labour and often starve are an excrescence.

So much for the present and so long as the war lasts. The golden future of our dreams, that new order of freedom of which we hear so much, is envisaged as follows: After the conclusion of the war "a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life" will be set up to devise the framework of the new Constitution. We have seen what, in the opinion of Mr. Amery and the Viceroy, these elements in India's national life are. We shall have (or so it is proposed, but destiny may dispose otherwise) a noble company of bejewelled maharajahs, belted knights, European industrial and commercial magnates, big landlords and taluqadars, Indian industrialists, representatives of the imperial services, and a few commoner mortals, all sitting together, possibly under the presidentship of the Viceroy himself, drawing up India's Constitution. Thus will India exercise her right to self-

determination. It will be a pretty pattern that this assembly will produce, with a flower for every vested interest and feudal relic, and with the background of British imperialism. Above all, British interests, which are so important a part of India's national life, will have been preserved and given their rightful due. This will be called Dominion Status so that everyone may be pleased.

But let it not be forgotten that even this assembly cannot have it all its own way. The British Government cannot divest itself of its high responsibility to protect British vested interests whatever happens. So whatever this assembly decides must be "subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed upon her and for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility."

Meanwhile it is suggested that the Government will welcome every sincere and practical step taken by representative Indians to reach a basis of friendly agreement on the form that the post-war representative body should take and the principles and outlines of the Constitution. These representative Indians must, of course, come from the principal elements of India's national life as outlined above.

If some of us in the outer darkness do not approve of this pattern or fancy this picture, it is, no doubt, our misfortune. If we wonder sometimes how any British Government can presume to make this offer to the Indian people in this age of change and revolution, when empires are disappearing and the old structure collapses all over the world, it must indicate how simple and naïve we are. We ought to have known that imperialisms do not abdicate; they hold on even when it is manifest folly to endeavour to do so. But in our simplicity we cannot help feeling a mild surprise at the fact that leaders of the British Labour Party, those champions of freedom and Socialism, should be jointly responsible for this "offer" to India. But it is no offer. It is a decision announced and intended to be imposed upon us, whether we like it or not.

The Congress had ventured to suggest another way—that the Constitution should be framed by a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise by the people. This had the misfortune of being a democratic way and of giving equal importance to each individual. It is true that “the principal elements of India’s national life,” as conceived by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, might have found some difficulty in getting elected. Democratic elections are not always just to these important elements, like those representing British or Indian vested interests.

The Viceroy has further stated that: “It goes without saying that they (the British Government) could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government.”

This statement is worthy of close consideration. It is obvious that any system of government that might be proposed for India will find many odd groups and interests opposed to it. No system can possibly be devised which would be unanimously accepted by all these groups and interests and by the four hundred millions of India. All agrarian legislation has to deal with the inherent conflicts between the landlord and the tenant; all labour legislation is looked upon with disfavour by the captains of industry. Even among industrialists in India there is a continuing conflict between British vested interests and the rising Indian industry, which has been deliberately prevented from expanding so that the former might not suffer. So the conflicts of interests run through the whole of national life as it is constituted today, because there are different classes with conflicting interests. Some of us would like to have a classless society, and I have no doubt that it will ultimately come. Meanwhile the only known method of resolving these conflicts, other than that of force and coercion, is the democratic method. If any group can hold up a political or economic change, even though this is



desired by the great majority, it must lead to a disruption of the State and possibly to civil conflict.

The British Government's statement means that there can be no far-reaching political or economic changes, for some group is bound to object to them. There are Indian reactionary groups that will play that rôle. Even if no Indian group objects, British vested interests will do so. This means that the *status quo* will largely remain to the great advantage of British imperialism. This is the way to perpetuate the present order, to make India safe for British vested interests.

The idea that the British Government should be asked to coerce any group is absurd. No one has ever hinted at this except the reactionaries and communalists, who want the coercion of the progressive elements. The British Government is asked to put an end to all its present coercion; in fact, to retire from the Indian scene as a Government. Only then will conditions be produced in India which will induce various elements in India to seek a basis of agreement among themselves, for the alternative is civil war. So long as the British Government remains it plays off one against the other, and produces an unhealthy desire in the minds of some to seek its favour as against their own compatriots.

The British Government says it will not coerce an important group and impose a system of government which it does not like. The alternative surely is that it will coerce other groups who want that particular system of government. What exactly has been the function of the British Government in India, and what is it today? It is to coerce the Indian people as a whole, every group, in order to maintain its own hold and special position. It is to suppress Indian industry in favour of British industry in India. It is to maintain an army of occupation whose chief function is to coerce the Indian people. It is to uphold Indian Princes by coercing their subjects into submission. It is strange to be told that the British Government does not want to use coercion. What else does it do in India?

Again, how is one to tell that an important group does

not want a particular system of government? Ordinarily that group votes, and other groups vote, and then it is possible to know what the feeling or intentions of various groups are. They may come to a mutual arrangement, trying to find some common measure of agreement, or if unhappily they do not, there is a difference which can only be reconciled by democratic methods, such as impartial arbitration.

The British proposal is ideally suited to prevent any progress or major change. British interests in any case will bar the way. As a matter of fact, the Government have gone further and stated that in any event they are not going to divest themselves of responsibility for the protection of these interests. Whatever happens, these interests remain; and so, whatever happens, the British financial and industrial structure dominates India. It so happens that this is exactly what we want to get rid of. There can be no progress or lessening of India's appalling poverty till we succeed in this. All else is secondary.

We have an intimate glimpse from the Viceroy's statement of the blessings of Dominion Status which is held out to us as a lure. Many of us, however, are not attracted by this picture.

It may be said that the Viceroy's statement about not coercing any large element which disapproves of a system of government applies chiefly to the religious minorities. Certainly let us agree that there must be no such coercion, and the British Government must on no account employ coercion. Nor should others. But where does coercion come in? Who suggests it?

The Congress proposal was not that the Congress or any party or religious group should be given power. It asked for power for the Indian people as a whole, and wanted the Indian people to decide what they desired, in a democratic manner. It went further in its desire to protect all minority interests. It agreed to separate electorates for such minorities as desired it, and laid down that matters relating to minority rights must not be settled by a majority vote. They must be settled by agreement or, if

unhappily this is not possible in regard to any particular matter, through an impartial tribunal. It is difficult to conceive any more comprehensive or effective method for minority protection, short of throwing overboard all pretence at democracy and establishing a dictatorship of the minority.

So far as the Muslims in India are concerned, they are only technically a minority. They are vast in numbers and powerful in other ways, and it is patent that they cannot be coerced against their will, just as the Hindus cannot be coerced against their will. If the two cannot agree as organized groups, it will be unfortunate for India, and no one can say what the consequence will be. But let us always remember that in political and economic matters people do not function as religious groups. The lines of cleavage are different.

The question of minority protection is raised in the interests of others, who are neither Hindu nor Muslim. It seems amazing to me that any Indian, whether he is a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, or belongs to any other faith, should seek protection against his own compatriots from a foreign authority. As a matter of fact, they do not, except a few, who do it, not because of religion, but because of vested interests.<sup>1</sup>

Let us be clear about it. This communal question is essentially one of protection of vested interests, and religion has always been a useful stalking-horse for this purpose. Those who have feudal privileges and vested interests fear change and become the camp-followers of British imperialism. The British Government, on the other hand, delights in using the communal argument to deny freedom, democracy, or any major change, and to hold on to power and privilege in India. That is the *raison d'être* and the justification of communalism in India. Someone has recently rightly called the Indian

<sup>1</sup> The demand for such protection does not come from the masses or from any large section of these communities, but from individuals and small groups who seek to protect vested interests and not any religious rights or freedom.

Princes Britain's Fifth Column in India. Communalism and its champions might well be included in this column of present-day disrepute. It is not surprising, therefore, that communalists and Princes get on well together and co-operate with each other. They have a common purpose to serve—to obstruct India's freedom so that vested interests might flourish.

It is not, of course, enough to dispose of communalism by this simple analysis, although this is the basic explanation. There are so many other factors, and it is perfectly true that mass elements, who may be affected by communalism, have neither vested interests to preserve, nor have they any love for British imperialism. To understand how they have been influenced by communalism and have often acted against their own interests is to understand how Hitler came to influence mass elements among the German people. The analogy is not complete, but it helps. People are swept away by slogans which appeal to them, and then they are used for entirely different purposes. There has been a strange similarity in the recent development of the communalist technique in India to Nazi methods.

Communalism began in India by a demand for a specified share in services and in representation in the Legislatures. It has now developed into an openly anti-national, anti-democratic movement, demanding the partition of India. For a long while it had no programme, constructive or otherwise. It lived on invective, violence, and general offensiveness. It is amazing how it vulgarized our public life. It discovered that what it had valued most in the past—separate electorates—brought little good. In fact, they weakened minority groups. Then by the very force of the logic of hatred and separation that it had pursued, it had to go to the extreme of demanding a partition of India. The medieval theory of religious groups constituting a political community, which collapsed before an advancing nationalism in Europe, was revived. An idea similar to that of the Crusades, of Christendom *versus* Islam, suddenly appeared (it is said with British

inspiration) in India. It was an astonishing throw-back. Whoever else benefited or suffered from it, it was clear that British imperialism was the gainer.

It is curious that even in early and medieval India this theory never functioned in the Western way. Other religions were welcomed and accommodated. The early Christians came in the first century and found a home. Jews were accommodated, Muslims were welcome to spread their religion and settle down (till invasion brought political conflicts), Parsis came and were absorbed. Later, Muslim rulers thought in terms of building up a single nation of the Muslim newcomers and the Hindus and others. The great Akbar laid the foundations for this. The new cultural elements were absorbed and a common culture gradually developed, especially in Northern India.

And now we are told to go back to the pre-Akbar days, to reverse the process of history, to think in terms of medievalism. When nationalism is giving place to internationalism an even narrower creed than nationalism is advanced, and this finds favour and protection with our British rulers. When the world is groping blindly towards a real Federation of Nations, it is suggested that India should be split up into various parts.

Muslim countries—Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Persia—have long discarded this medieval theory. They are intensely nationalist and are proud of their ancient culture. Some of them deliberately go to their pre-Islamic days to find cultural inspiration. The Chinese Muslims are proud of their Chinese culture and fight for China's freedom. That is the course of history. Indeed, it is a course that has already been run, and the mighty revolution that is taking place in the world today will lay down another course—the way to world federation based on national freedom and a juster economic system. Privilege and vested interest will have to go.

That is the goal of India—a united, free, democratic country, closely associated in a world federation with other free nations. We want independence, but not the old type

of narrow, exclusive independence. We believe that the day of separate warring national States should be ended.

We want independence and not Dominion or any other status. Every thinking person knows that the whole conception of Dominion Status belongs to past history; it has no future. It cannot survive this war, whatever the results of this war. But whether it survives or not, we want none of it. We do not want to be bound down to a group of nations which has dominated and exploited us; we will not be in an empire in some parts of which we are treated as helots and where racialism runs riot. We want to cut adrift from the financial domination of the City of London. We want to be completely free with no reservations or exceptions, except such as we ourselves approve, in common with others, in order to create a Federation of Nations, or a new World Order. If this new World Order or Federation does not come in the near future, we should like to be closely associated in a Federation with our neighbours—China, Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Persia. We are prepared to take risks and face dangers. We do not want the so-called protection of the British army or navy. We will shift for ourselves.

If the past had not been there to bear witness, the present would have made us come to this final decision. For even in this present of war and peril there is no change in the manner of treatment accorded to our people by British imperialism. Let those who seek the favour and protection of this imperialism go its way. We go ours.

ALLAHABAD,

*August 10, 1940.*



## EPILOGUE

### *On the Verge*

For many months past friends and acquaintances have come to me and whispered: "Do you know that lists of Congressmen have been prepared for immediate arrest as soon as the signal is given? Every district and town has such lists, possibly even our village mandals. There is List A and List B, or whatever it is called, and there may be other lists also. All manner of questionnaires are issued confidentially to the district authorities and passed on by them to the smaller officials: Who are the principal Congress workers? What is their status and income? What are their failings? Can they be bought over or influenced? The *Seva Dal*<sup>1</sup> especially demands attention and must be fully enquired into. Where does the money come from for Congress work and how is it spent?"

So this whispering has continued, and there has been some excitement among our friends and the general public. But, curiously enough, Congress workers who ought to have been affected most by these rumours and happenings have remained singularly cold to them. We have long been used to all this and, anyway, why worry?

Now that Satyagraha seems at hand the whispering grows fiercer, and all manner of good advice is given to us by our well-wishers. Our letters are opened, our telephone conversations tapped, our bank accounts secretly examined by the emissaries of the Government. True. But why worry or get excited? We are grateful for the solicitude of our friends and value and appreciate their goodwill. But we do not mind overmuch all these preparations made by the Government to crush Congress and the National Movement. We do not ignore them, for we can measure, more accurately than others, what they will amount to in human agony and suffering among our people. Yet we do not grow excited. We pursue the even tenor of our ways,

<sup>1</sup> The Congress Volunteers Organization.



ever ready for the time when the button is pressed and the whole weight of a mighty State machine is turned against us.

Why blame the Government? An alien imperialist Government must, so long as it exists, function in that way. It must have recourse to coercion, exploitation, methods of terror, corruption, secret police, and the like. If we put up with such a Government, why complain of its inevitable ways? If we go to bed with a tiger, why wonder if it digs its claws into us and tries to make a meal of us?

But, howsoever calmly we may view the present and the immediate future, there is a tinge of excitement in living on the verge of big happenings, especially when our personal lives are involved. Even those of us of an older generation who have schooled and trained ourselves and grown somewhat accustomed to sudden changes in our environment cannot wholly escape this feeling of abnormality. So we try to tie up the loose ends in our lives and work, to pack up our tooth-brushes, and generally to prepare ourselves mentally for whatever may come.

On the verge. Not only of Satyagraha and big happenings in India, but of world upheavals and changes. Mighty things are afoot and the Satyagraha we may begin will merge itself in those great happenings, will influence them and be influenced by them. The people of India will keep step with this changing story of humanity and resolutely pursue the goal they have set before them. That goal is national independence, social freedom, and world co-operation for peace and progress. It is this that governs all our activities and fills our minds, and makes our blood tingle and course through our veins, whatever the immediate step we take might be.

For a while we thought that the people of England, with the experience of the past few years of disastrous misgovernment by their leaders, and faced by peril and disaster, might turn away from their old paths and take to new ones. But that was not to be, and they still bow down to their old gods and pin their faith in maintaining their empire. The appeasers may have failed with Germany, but they will continue to appease Franco and the militarists

of Japan. Lord Halifax, Lord Simon, and Sir Samuel Hoare are still there to tell us what the British Government stands for. The Labour Party toes the line.

It was open to the British people to change all this, and to do not only the right thing but the profitable thing. Not just to rely on superior violence to crush the Nazi military machine—a risky and doubtful business—but to summon the conscience and active goodwill of the world to their side. To set aside empire and declare themselves in favour of freedom for every nation and people. To proclaim the new order for which people hunger everywhere, and to act immediately in accordance with those professions. What an astonishing response that might have evoked all over the world, not only in the subject colonial countries but among the peoples of Europe now under Hitler's sway. Victory in war depends ultimately on morale, on the demoralization and cracking up of the enemy. This was within Britain's grasp, but Britain's rulers preferred to hold on to their empire and to stick to imperialism even though this might help Hitler.

They have chosen their path, and in doing so have not hesitated to insult and injure the people of India. They have lined up with all the reactionaries in India and have tried to sow the seeds of disruption and civil conflict in the country. They have given us an intimate glimpse into their minds, and what we have seen there was not a pleasant sight and we shall not forget it for a long time to come.

We do not know what the future will bring to us, to our country, and to the world. It does not much matter what happens to us as individuals. We shall pass out, anyhow, sooner or later. But it does matter very much what happens to India, for if India lives and is free we all live, and if India goes down then who lives amongst us?

But India will live and live in freedom, for she has not survived through the ages to go down before insolent might. And there will be no peace in India and no peace between India and Britain till the proud imperialism of England is ended and India is free and independent.

In a recent debate in the House of Commons, Mr. Amery ended his speech by quoting some words of Cromwell. Mr. Amery was addressing Mr. Chamberlain's Government. I address a larger audience—the British Government certainly, the British financiers who shape policy in India, the British ruling class, Viceroys, Governors, and all who hang on to them. So, in the words of Cromwell, I say: "You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go."

*October. 1940.*

## *Jawaharlal Nehru's Statement at his Trial*

HELD IN GORAKHPUR PRISON, NOVEMBER 3, 1940

I HAVE been told that the charge against me is based on the reports of three speeches I delivered in the Gorakhpur district early in October last. Copies of these reports, and in one case their translation into English, have been given to me. I have read these, and I cannot congratulate the persons who were responsible for the reporting. These reports, though presumably taken down in shorthand, are scrappy and incomplete, confusing, and often making little sense.

I am a lover of words and phrases and try to use them appropriately. Whatever my opinions might be, the words I use are meant to express them intelligibly and in ordered sequence. A reader of these reports will find little intelligence or sequence in them, and is likely to obtain an entirely distorted impression of what I actually said.

I make no complaint of this reporting, and I do not suggest that deliberate distortions have been made. But I do want to make it clear that what I said was in many respects entirely different from what the jumble of words in the reports would lead me to imagine. If this is so in the reporting of my speeches, when care is taken and the more qualified men are employed, I cease to wonder what happens when the speeches of others are reported by totally unqualified persons and these are made the basis of charges in courts of law.

It is not my intention to give details of the many errors and mistakes in these reports. That would mean rewriting them completely. That would waste your time, sir, and mine and would serve little purpose. I am not here to defend myself, and perhaps what I say in this statement will make your task easier. I do not yet know the exact nature of the charge against me. I gather that it has

something to do with the Defence of India Rules and that it relates to my references to war and to the attempts being made to compel the people of India to take part in the war effort. If that is so, I shall gladly admit the charge. It is not necessary to go to garbled reports to find out what I or other Congressmen say in regard to India and the war. The Congress resolutions and statements, carefully and precisely worded, are there for all the world to know. By those resolutions and statements I stand, and I consider it my duty to take the message of the Congress to the people of India.

As a matter of fact, ever since the Congress came to the conclusion that, in order to give effect to the Congress policy, *satyagraha*, or civil disobedience, should be started, I have endeavoured to check myself in my utterances and to avoid what might be termed *satyagraha*. Such was the direction of our chief, Mahatma Gandhi, who desired that the *satyagraha* should be confined to particular persons of his choice.

One such person was selected, and he expressed in public utterances the Congress attitude to the war, laying some emphasis on the Congress policy of non-violence. It was my good fortune to have been selected to follow him and to give expression to the Congress viewpoint, with perhaps greater emphasis on the political aspect. It had been decided that I should do so, after giving due notice to the authorities, from November 7 onwards, in the district of Allahabad. That programme has been varied owing to my arrest and trial, and the opportunity to give frank and full expression to Congress policy in regard to the war has come to me earlier than I anticipated.

If I was chosen, or if before me Shri Vinoba Bhave was chosen for this purpose, it was not to give expression to our individual views. We were symbols who spoke the mind of India in the name of India, or, at any rate, of a vast number of people in India. As individuals we may have counted for little, but as such symbols and representatives of the Indian people we counted for a great deal. In the name of those people we asserted their right to

freedom and to decide for themselves what they should do and what they would not do; we challenged the right of any other authority by whomsoever constituted to deprive them of this right and to force its will upon them. No individual or groups of individuals, not deriving authority from the Indian people and not responsible to them in any way, should impose their will upon them and thrust the hundreds of millions of India, without any reference to them or their representatives, into a mighty war which was none of their seeking. It was amazing and full of significance that this should be done in the name of freedom and self-determination and democracy, for which, it was alleged, the war was being waged.

We were slow in coming to our final conclusions; we hesitated and parleyed; we sought a way out honourable to all the parties concerned. We failed, and the inevitable conclusion was forced upon us that, so far as the British Government or their representatives were concerned, we were still looked upon as chattel to do their will and to continue to be exploited in their imperialist structure. That was a position which we could never tolerate, whatever the consequences.

There are very few persons in India, I suppose, whether they are Indians or Englishmen, who have for years past so consistently raised their voices against Fascism and Naziism as I have done. My whole nature rebelled against them, and on many an occasion I vehemently criticized the pro-Fascist and appeasement policy of the British Government. Ever since the invasion of Manchuria, and subsequently in Abyssinia, Central Europe, Spain, and China, I saw with pain and anguish how country after country was betrayed in the name of this appeasement and how the lamps of liberty were being put out. I realized that imperialism could only function in this way; it had to appease its rival imperialism, or else its own ideological foundations were weakened. It had to choose between this and liquidating itself in favour of democratic freedom. There was no middle way.

So long as appeasement applied to Manchuria, Abys-

sinia, Czecho-Slovakia, Spain, and Albania, to "far-away countries about which few people had ever heard," as the then Prime Minister of England put it, it did not matter much and was faithfully pursued. But when it came nearer home and threatened the British Empire itself, the clash came and war began.

Again there were two alternatives before the British Government and each Government engaged in the war—to continue to function in the old imperialist way or to end this in their own domains and become the leaders of the urge for freedom and revolutionary change the world over. They chose the former, though they still talked in terms of freedom, self-determination, and democracy. But their conception of freedom was, even in words, limited to Europe, and evidently meant freedom to carry on with their Empire in the old way. Not even peril and disaster have weakened their intention to hold on to their Empire and enforce their will upon subject peoples.

In India we have had over a year of war government. The people's elected Legislatures have been suspended and ignored, and a greater and more widespread autocracy prevails here than anywhere else in the world. Recent measures have suppressed completely such limited freedom as the Press possessed to give facts and opinions. If this is the prelude to the freedom that is promised us, or to the "New Order" about which so much is said, then we can well imagine what the later stages will be when England emerges as a full-blooded Fascist State.

I am convinced that the large majority of people in England are weary of Empire and hunger for a real new order. But we have to deal, not with them, but with their Government, and we have no doubt in our minds as to what that Government aims at. With that we have nothing in common, and we shall resist to the uttermost. We have therefore decided to be no party to this imposed war and to declare this to the world.

This war has led already to widespread destruction and will lead to even greater horror and misery. With those who suffer we sympathize deeply and in all sincerity. But

unless the war has a revolutionary aim of ending the present order and substituting something based on freedom and co-operation, it will lead to a continuation of wars and violence and utmost destruction.

That is why we must dissociate ourselves from this war and advise our people to do likewise and not help in any way with money or men. That is our bounden duty. But even apart from this, the treatment accorded the Indian people during the past year by the British authorities, the latter's attempt to encourage every disruptive and reactionary tendency, their forcible realizations of money for the war from even the poor of India, and their repeated affronts to Indian nationalism, are such that we can never forget or ignore.

No self-respecting people can tolerate such behaviour, and the people of India have no intention of tolerating it.

I stand before you, sir, as an individual being tried for certain offences against the State. You are a symbol of that State. But I am something more than an individual also; I, too, am a symbol at the present moment, a symbol of Indian nationalism, resolved to break away from the British Empire and achieve the independence of India. It is not me that you are seeking to judge and condemn, but rather the hundreds of millions of the people of India, and that is a large task even for a proud Empire. Perhaps it may be that, though I am standing before you on my trial, it is the British Empire itself that is on its trial before the bar of the world. There are more powerful forces at work in the world today than courts of law; there are elemental urges for freedom and food and security which are moving vast masses of people, and history is being moulded by them. The future recorder of this history might well say that in the hour of supreme trial the Government of Britain and the people of Britain failed because they could not adapt themselves to a changing world. He may muse over the fate of empires which have always fallen because of this weakness and call it destiny. Certain causes inevitably produce certain results. We know the causes; the results are inexorably in their train.



It is a small matter to me what happens to me in this trial or subsequently. Individuals count for little; they come and go, as I shall go when my time is up. Seven times I have been tried and convicted by British authority in India, and many years of my life lie buried within prison walls. An eighth time<sup>1</sup> or a ninth, and a few more years, make little difference.

But it is no small matter what happens to India and her millions of sons and daughters. That is the issue before me, and that ultimately is the issue before you, sir. If the British Government imagines it can continue to exploit them and play about with them against their will, as it has done for so long in the past, then it is grievously mistaken. It has misjudged their present temper and read history in vain.

I should like to add that I am happy to be tried in Gorakhpur. The peasantry of Gorakhpur are the poorest and the most long-suffering in my Province. I am glad that it was my visit to the Gorakhpur district and my attempt to serve its people that has led to this trial.

I thank you, sir, for your courtesy.

<sup>1</sup> On November 4, 1940, Nehru was sentenced to three consecutive terms of rigorous imprisonment, each of sixteen months, making a total of four years. He was sent to Dehra Dun gaol, where for some time he was kept in the old (and now disused) "gallow cell." He was released on December 4, 1941, when the Government of India ordered the release of some 6,000 or 7,000 prisoners whom it had kept in gaol for what it called "Symbolic Civil Disobedience."

# APPENDIX A: *Congress and the Provincial Elections, 1937*

## 1. CONGRESS ELECTION MANIFESTO: 1936

*Adopted by the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay on August 22, 1936*

FOR more than fifty years the Indian National Congress has laboured for the freedom of India, and ever, as its strength grew and it came to represent more and more the nationalist urge of the Indian people and their desire to put an end to exploitation by British Imperialism, it came into conflict with the ruling power. During recent years the Congress has led great movements for national freedom and has sought to develop sanctions whereby such freedom can be achieved by peaceful mass action and the disciplined sacrifice and suffering of the Indian people. To the lead of the Congress the Indian people have responded in abundant measure and thus confirmed their inherent right to freedom. That struggle for freedom still continues and must continue till India is free and independent.

These years have seen the development of an economic crisis in India and the world which has led to a progressive deterioration in the condition of all classes of our people. The poverty-stricken masses are today in the grip of an even more abject poverty and destitution, and this growing disease urgently and insistently demands a radical remedy. Poverty and unemployment have long been the lot of our peasantry and industrial workers; today they cover and crush other classes also—the artisan, the trader, the small merchant, the middle-class intelligentsia. For the vast millions of our countrymen the problem of achieving national independence has become an urgent one, for only independence can give us the power to solve our economic and social problems and end the exploitation of our masses.

The growth of the national movement and the economic crisis have resulted in the intense repression of the Indian people and the suppression of civil liberties, and the British Government has sought to strengthen the imperialist bonds that envelop India and to perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the Indian people by enacting the Government of India Act of 1935.

In the international sphere crisis follows crisis in an ever deepening degree and world war hangs over the horizon. The Lucknow Congress called the attention of the nation to this grave situation in India and the world, and declared its opposition to the participation of India in an imperialist war and its firm resolve to continue the struggle for the independence of India.

The Congress rejected in its entirety the constitution imposed

upon India by the new Act and declared that no constitution imposed by outside authority and no constitution which curtails the sovereignty of the people of India, and does not recognize their right to shape and control fully their political and economic future, can be accepted. Such a constitution, in its opinion, must be based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a Constituent Assembly.

The Congress has always laid stress on the development of the strength of the people and the forging of sanctions to enforce the people's will. To this end it has carried on activities outside the legislatures. The Congress holds that real strength comes from thus organizing and serving the masses.

Adhering to this policy and objective, but in view of the present situation and in order to prevent the operation of forces calculated to strengthen alien domination and exploitation, the Congress decided to contest seats in the coming elections for the provincial legislatures. But the purpose of sending congressmen to the legislatures under the new Act is not to co-operate in any way with the Act but to combat it and seek to end it. It is to carry out, in so far as is possible, the Congress policy of rejection of the Act, and to resist British Imperialism in its attempts to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. In the opinion of the Congress, activity in the legislatures should be such as to help in the work outside, in the strengthening of the people, and in the development of the sanctions which are essential to freedom.

The new legislatures, hedged and circumscribed by safeguards and special powers for the protection of British and other vested interests, cannot yield substantial benefits, and they are totally incapable of solving the vital problems of poverty and unemployment. But they may well be used by British imperialism for its own purposes to the disadvantage and injury of the Indian people. The Congress representatives will seek to resist this, and to take all possible steps to end the various regulations, Ordinances and Acts which oppress the Indian people and smother their will to freedom. They will work for the establishment of civil liberty, for the release of political prisoners and detenus, and to repair the wrongs done to the peasantry and to public institutions in the course of the national struggle.

The Congress realizes that independence cannot be achieved through these legislatures, nor can the problems of poverty and unemployment be effectively tackled by them. Nevertheless the Congress places its general programme before the people of India so that they may know what it stands for and what it will try to achieve, whenever it has the power to do so.

At the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 the general Congress objective was defined in the Fundamental Rights resolution. That general definition still holds. The last five years of developing

crisis have however necessitated a further consideration of the problems of poverty and unemployment and other economic problems. With a view to this the Lucknow Congress laid particular stress on the fact that "the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce," and called upon the Provincial Congress Committees to frame full agrarian programmes. The agrarian programme which will be drawn up by the A.I.C.C. on the basis of these provincial programmes will be issued later.

Pending the formulation of a fuller programme the Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi—that it stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent, and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue.

The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, an enquiry into and scaling down of debts and the provision for cheap credit facilities by the State. This relief should extend to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders, and petty traders.

In regard to industrial workers the policy of the Congress is to secure to them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as the economic conditions in the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment, and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.

The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities, whether legal or social, in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in favour of maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and obligations of citizens of a free India.

The stress that the Congress has laid on the removal of untouchability and for the social and economic uplift of the Harijans and the backward classes is well known. It holds that they should be equal citizens with others, with equal rights in all civic matters.

The encouragement of khadi and village industries has also long been a principal plank of the Congress programme. In regard to the larger industries, protection should be given, but the rights of

the workers and the producers of raw materials should be safeguarded, and due regard should be paid to the interests of village industries.

The treatment of political prisoners has long been a scandal in India. Every effort should be made to improve this and make it humane. It is equally necessary to change the whole basis of the prison administration so that every prisoner might be treated in a humanitarian and rational manner.

The communal decision, which forms part of the new Act, has led to much controversy and the Congress attitude towards it has been misunderstood by some people. The rejection in its entirety of the new Act by the Congress inevitably involves the rejection of the communal decision. Even apart from the Act as a whole, the communal decision is wholly unacceptable as being inconsistent with independence and the principles of democracy; it encourages dissipated and disruptive tendencies, hinders the normal growth and consideration of economic and social questions, is a barrier to national progress, and strikes at the root of Indian unity. No community or group in India profits by it in any real sense, for the larger injury caused by it to all outweighs the petty benefits that some have received. Ultimately it probably injures most those groups whom it is meant to favour. The only party that profits by it is the third party which rules and exploits us.

The attitude of the Congress is, therefore, not one of indifference or neutrality. It disapproves strongly of the communal decision and would like to end it. But the Congress has repeatedly laid stress on the fact that a satisfactory solution of the communal question can come only through the goodwill and co-operation of the principal communities concerned. An attempt by one group to get some communal favour from the British Government at the expense of another group results in an increase of communal tension and exploitation of both groups by the Government. Such a policy is hardly in keeping with the dignity of Indian nationalism; it does not fit in with the struggle for independence. It does not pay either party in the long run; it side-tracks the main issue.

The Congress, therefore, holds that the right way to deal with the situation created by the communal decision is to intensify our struggle for independence and, at the same time, to seek a common basis for an agreed solution which helps to strengthen the unity of India. The effort of one community only to change the decision in the face of the opposition of another community might well result in confirming and consolidating that decision, for conflict between the two produces the very situation which gives governments a chance of enforcing such a decision. The Congress thus is of opinion that such one-sided agitation can bear no useful result.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the whole communal problem, in spite of its importance, has nothing to do with the major prob-

lems of India—poverty and widespread unemployment. It is not a religious problem and it affects only a handful of people at the top. The peasantry, the workers, the traders and merchants and the lower middle-class of all communities are in no way touched by it and their burdens remain.

The question of accepting ministries or not in the new legislatures was postponed for decision by the Lucknow Congress. The A.I.C.C. is of opinion that it will be desirable for this decision to be taken after the elections. Whatever the decision on this question might be, it must be remembered that, in any event, the Congress stands for the rejection of the new Act, and for no co-operation in its working. The object remains the same: the ending of the Act. With a view to this end every endeavour will be made to prevent the introduction and functioning of the federal part of the scheme, which is intended to perpetuate the domination of imperialist interests and the feudal interests of the States over the whole country and prevent all progress towards freedom. It must be borne in mind that the new provincial assemblies will form the electorate for the proposed federal central legislature and the composition of those provincial legislatures will materially affect the fate of the federal constitution.

We appeal to the country to give every support to the Congress in the elections that are coming. National welfare demands it. The fight for independence calls for it. The effectiveness of the work that the Congress members of the legislatures will do will depend on their numbers and their discipline and the backing and support that the country gives them. With a clear majority they will be in a position to fight the Act and to help effectively in the struggle for independence. Every party and group that stands aloof from the Congress organisation tends, knowingly or unknowingly, to become a source of weakness to the nation and a source of strength to the forces ranged against it. For the fight for independence a joint front is necessary. The Congress offers that joint national front which comprises all classes and communities, bound together by their desire to free India, end the exploitation of her people, and build up a strong and prosperous and united nation, resting on the well-being of the masses.

With this great and inspiring goal before us, for which so many men and women of India have suffered and sacrificed their all under the banner of the Congress, and for which today thousands of our countrymen are suffering silently and with brave endurance, we call upon our people with full hope and confidence to rally to the cause of the Congress, of India, of freedom.

## 2. THE KARACHI RESOLUTION: 1931

The Karachi Congress resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme, as varied by the All-India Congress Committee in its meeting held in Bombay on August 6, 7, and 8, 1931, runs as follows:

This Congress is of opinion that to enable the masses to appreciate what "Swaraj," as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them. In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions. The Congress therefore declares that any constitution which may be agreed to on its behalf should provide, or enable the Swaraj Government to provide, the following:

### FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES

i. (i) Every citizen of India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination, and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for a purpose not opposed to law or morality.

(ii) Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.

(iii) The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.

(iv) All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.

(v) No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

(vi) All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.

(vii) Every citizen has the right to keep and bear arms, in accordance with regulations and reservations made in that behalf.

(viii) No person shall be deprived of his liberty, nor shall his dwelling or property be entered, sequestered, or confiscated, save in accordance with law.

(ix) The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.

(x) The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

(xi) The State shall provide for free and compulsory primary education.

(xii) The State shall confer no titles.

(xiii) There shall be no capital punishment.

(xiv) Every citizen is free to move throughout India and to stay

and settle in any part thereof, to acquire property and to follow any trade or calling, and to be treated equally with regard to legal prosecution or protection in all parts of India.

### LABOUR

2. (a) The organization of economic life must conform to the principle of justice, to the end that it may secure a decent standard of living.

(b) The State shall safeguard the interests of industrial workers and shall secure for them, by suitable legislation and in other ways, a living wage, healthy conditions of work, limited hours of labour, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, and protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment.

3. Labour to be freed from serfdom and conditions bordering on serfdom.

4. Protection of women workers, and especially, adequate provision for leave during maternity period.

5. Children of school-going age shall not be employed in mines and factories.

6. Peasants and workers shall have the right to form unions to protect their interest.

### TAXATION AND EXPENDITURE

7. The system of land tenure and revenue and rent shall be reformed and an equitable adjustment made of the burden on agricultural land, immediately giving relief to the smaller peasantry, by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them, and in case of uneconomic holdings, exempting them from rent, so long as necessary, with such relief as may be just and necessary to holders of small estates affected by such exemption or reduction in rent, and to the same end, imposing a graded tax on net incomes from land above a reasonable minimum.

8. Death duties on a graduated scale shall be levied on property above a fixed minimum.

9. There shall be a drastic reduction of military expenditure so as to bring it down to at least one-half of the present scale.

10. Expenditure and salaries in civil departments shall be largely reduced. No servant of the State, other than specially employed experts and the like, shall be paid above a certain fixed figure, which should not ordinarily exceed Rs. 500 per month.

11. No duty shall be levied on salt manufactured in India.

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAMME

12. The State shall protect indigenous cloth; and for this purpose pursue the policy of exclusion of foreign cloth and foreign yarn



from the country and adopt such other measures as may be found necessary. The State shall also protect other indigenous industries, when necessary, against foreign competition.

13. Intoxicating drinks and drugs shall be totally prohibited, except for medicinal purposes.

14. Currency and exchange shall be regulated in the national interest.

15. The State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport.

16. Relief of agricultural indebtedness and control of usury—direct and indirect.

17. The State shall provide for the military training of citizens so as to organize a means of national defence apart from the regular military forces.

### 3. AGRARIAN PROGRAMME: 1936

#### *Resolution 12, Lucknow Congress, 1936*

This Congress is of opinion that the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce. The final solution of this problem inevitably involves the removal of British imperialistic exploitation, a thorough change of the land tenure and revenue systems and a recognition by the State of its duty to provide work for the rural unemployed masses.

In view, however, of the fact that agrarian conditions and land tenure and revenue systems differ in the various provinces, it is desirable to consult the Provincial Congress Committees and such peasant organizations as the Working Committee considers fit, in the drawing up of a full All-India Agrarian Programme as well as a programme for each province. This Congress, therefore, calls upon each Provincial Congress Committee to make recommendations in detail to the Working Committee by August 31, 1936, for being considered and placed before the All-India Congress Committee, having particular regard to the following matters:

1. Freedom of organization of agricultural labourers and peasants.
2. Safeguarding of the interests of peasants where there are intermediaries between the State and themselves.
3. Just and fair relief of agricultural indebtedness, including arrears of rent and revenue.
4. Emancipation of the peasants from feudal and semi-feudal levies.
5. Substantial reduction in respect of rent and revenue demands.

6. A just allotment of the State expenditure for the social, economic and cultural amenities of villages.
7. Protection against harassing restrictions on the utilization of local natural facilities for their domestic and agricultural needs.
8. Freedom from oppression and harassment at the hands of Government officials and landlords.
9. Fostering industries for relieving rural unemployment.

#### 4. THE ELECTION RESULTS

1. Elections to the Provincial Councils under the new constitution were held in February, 1937.

2. The total electorate was over 30 millions, of whom 54·5 per cent. went to the polls.

3. In Assam and the North-West Frontier Province over 70 per cent. voted, and only in Bengal under 50 per cent. voted.

4. In the Provinces where the number of Congress members in the legislatures is small (in Bengal, Punjab, and Sind particularly) large numbers of seats are confined to Moslems and other minority communities. Most of these seats were not contested by the Congress.

5. It contested 58 of the 482 Moslem seats in the whole country and won 26 of them, 15 in the North-West Frontier Province. Congress also won 4 Landholder seats and 3 Commerce and Industry seats.

6. The following table gives the Congress strength in each of the Provincial Councils.

It should be added that these results were obtained in spite of the long period of repression which preceded the elections, and during which many Congress organizations and activities were illegal.

	<i>Total Number of Seats.</i>		<i>Seats Won by Congress.</i>	
Madras ... ..	...	215	...	159
Bombay ... ..	...	175	...	87
Bengal ... ..	...	250	...	53
United Provinces ... ..	...	228	...	133
Punjab ... ..	...	175	...	18
Behar ... ..	...	152	...	95
Central Provinces ... ..	...	112	...	71
Assam ... ..	...	108	...	33
North-West Frontier ... ..	...	50	...	19
Orissa ... ..	...	60	...	36
Sind ... ..	...	60	...	7
		<hr/>		<hr/>
		1,585		711

## APPENDIX B: *Congress and the War*

### 1. CONGRESS RESOLUTION ON INDIA AND WAR (September 15, 1939)

THE Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from this policy of the British Government, the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session.

Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial Governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people, whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Naziism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognized standards of civilized behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Naziism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathize with those who resist it.

The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use India's resources, for purposes not approved by them will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If co-operation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority.

Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free, democratic State in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-1918 the declared war aims were the preservation of democracy, self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very Governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious Powers added largely to their colonial domains.

The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent States.

Subsequently history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by an ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czecho-Slovakia and Spain democracy was in peril, and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very Powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended, and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective, and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them.

If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests, and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a

world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and Imperialism and Fascism.

If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free, democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilizing the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only, but of humanity, and will not pass like other crises or wars, leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially, and economically. This crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganization of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all.

India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism, and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganization. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible, and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

The Working Committee have noted that many Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own States, in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme.

The British Government in India is more responsible for this

autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa, and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present.

Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, so as to allow for the full-elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed, as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and Imperialism and the new world order that is envisaged; in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of Imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?

A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and Fascism alike, will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future.

War has broken out in Europe, and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during recent years in Abyssinia, Spain, and China. Innumerable innocent men, women, and children have been bombed

to death from the air in open cities; cold-blooded massacres, torture, and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of Fascism and Imperialism are removed.

To that end the Working Committee are prepared to give their co-operation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of Imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep-rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to a victory of one people over another or to a dictated peace, but to a victory of real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and imperialist oppression.

The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world.

## 2. THE RAMGARH RESOLUTION (March, 1940)

The following Resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority at the Congress Session at Ramgarh, March, 1940. This Resolution, which had been previously passed by the Congress Working Committee at Patna, was proposed by Pandit Nehru. In Subjects Committee twenty-seven amendments were defeated and the Resolution was finally passed as it stood, only ten delegates voting against it. It secured an overwhelming majority in the Plenary Session of Congress.

"This Congress, having considered the grave and critical situation resulting from the war in Europe and British policy in regard to it, approves of and endorses the resolutions passed and the action taken on the war situation by the All-India Congress Committee and the Working Committee.

"The Congress considers the declaration, by the British Government, of India as a belligerent country, without any reference to the people of India, and the exploitation of

India's resources in this war, as an affront to them, which no self-respecting and freedom-loving people can accept or tolerate.

"The recent pronouncements made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India, demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India, as well as of other Asiatic and African countries.

"Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot, in any way, directly or indirectly, be a party to the war which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation.

"The Congress, therefore, strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain and of the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of the war. Neither the recruiting nor the money raised in India can be considered to be voluntary contributions from India. Congressmen, and those under the Congress influence, cannot help in the prosecution of the war with men, money or material.

"The Congress hereby declares again that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism, and Dominion Status, or any other status within the imperial structure, is wholly inapplicable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation, and would bind India in many ways to British policies and economic structure.

"The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations to other countries of the world, through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

"The Congress is further of opinion that while it will always be ready, as it ever has been, to make every effort to secure communal harmony, no permanent solution is possible except through a Constituent Assembly, where the rights of all recognized minorities will be fully protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of various majority and minority groups, or by arbitration if agreement is not reached on any point.

"Any alternative will lack finality. India's constitution must be based on independence, democracy and national unity, and the Congress repudiate attempts to divide India or to split up her nationhood.

"The Congress has always aimed at a constitution where the fullest freedom and opportunities of development are guaranteed to the group and the individual, and social injustice yields place to a juster social order."



### 3. THE DELHI RESOLUTION OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE (July 7, 1940).

After a five-day Session the Working Committee passed on July 7, 1940, the following Resolution which embodied Congress proposals which were rejected by the British Government. They constitute a determined effort at compromise on a practical basis and have been considered in certain sections of the Congress (including Mr. Gandhi) as violating the spirit of the Ramgarh decision. (Appendix 2.)

The following is the full text of the Resolution :

“The Working Committee have noted the serious happenings which have called forth fresh appeals to bring about a solution of the deadlock in the Indian political situation and, in view of the desirability of clarifying the Congress position, they have earnestly examined the whole situation once again in the light of the latest developments in world affairs.

“The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that the acknowledgment by Great Britain of the complete independence of India is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain and are, therefore, of opinion that such an unequivocal declaration should be immediately made and that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the Centre, which, though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all elected members in the Central Legislature, and secure the closest co-operation of responsible Governments in the provinces.

“The Working Committee are of opinion that unless the aforesaid declaration is made, and a National Government accordingly formed at the Centre without delay all efforts at organizing the material and moral resources of the country for defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from a free country, and will, therefore, be ineffective. The Working Committee declare that if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization in the defence of the country.”

### 4. ALL-INDIA CONGRESS DECISION, POONA (July 28, 1940)

After eight hours' debate the All-India Congress Committee at its Session at Poona on July 28, 1940, ratified (by 95 votes to 47) the Resolution passed by the Working Committee at Delhi on July 7, 1940. (See Appendix 3.)

Seven amendments were moved in the course of the debate, mostly by Socialists and Communists who argued that the Resolution attempted to pursue a policy of "surrender to Imperialism." All the amendments were either withdrawn or rejected.

The voting figures reveal that there were many neutrals.

It was stated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the course of the debate, and generally agreed, that there must be a strict and brief time limit to the offer contained in the Resolution after the expiration of which the offer should lapse.

## 5. THE VICEROY'S REPLY (August 8, 1940)

The statement of the Viceroy, made on August 8, 1940, was submitted to Parliament by the Secretary of State for India as a White Paper and published by H.M. Stationery Office.

This statement represents the present policy of the British Government and was formulated after the formation of the present Government and the failure of previous similar utterances by the Viceroy to bring about a settlement in India or acceptance by any appreciative section of Indian opinion.

The White Paper was debated in the House of Commons on August 19, 1940.

In its reply, dated August 22, 1940 (Appendix 6), the Congress took into consideration the Secretary of State's speech in the House of Commons which made it clear, beyond doubt, that the British Government had no intention of accepting the basic demands of the Indian people.

### THE VICEROY'S STATEMENT OF AUGUST 8, 1940

1. India's anxiety at the moment of critical importance in the world struggle against tyranny and aggression to contribute to the full to the common cause and to the triumph of our common ideals is manifest. She has already made a mighty contribution. She is anxious to make a greater contribution still. His Majesty's Government are deeply concerned that that unity of national purpose in India which would enable her to do so should be achieved at as early a moment as possible. They feel that some further statement of their intentions may help to promote that unity. In that hope they have authorized me to make the present statement.

2. Last October, His Majesty's Government again made it clear that Dominion Status was their objective for India. They added that they were ready to authorize the expansion of the Governor-General's Council to include a certain number of representatives of the political parties, and they proposed the establishment of a consultative committee. In order to facilitate harmonious co-operation,

it was obvious that some measure of agreement in the provinces between the majority parties was a desirable prerequisite to their joint collaboration at the Centre. Such agreement was, unfortunately, not reached, and in the circumstances no progress was then possible.

3. During the earlier part of this year I continued my efforts to bring the political parties together. In these last few weeks I again entered into conversations with prominent political personages in British India and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, the results of which have been reported to His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government have seen also the resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha.

4. It is clear that earlier differences which had prevented the achievement of national unity remain unbridged. Deeply as His Majesty's Government regret this, they do not feel that they should any longer, because of those differences, postpone the expansion of the Governor-General's Council, and the establishment of a body which will more closely associate Indian public opinion with the conduct of the war by the Central Government. They have authorized me accordingly to invite a certain number of representative Indians to join my Executive Council. They have authorized me, further, to establish a War Advisory Council which would meet at regular intervals and which would contain representatives of the Indian States and other interests in the national life of India as a whole.

5. The conversations which have taken place, and the resolutions of the bodies which I have just mentioned made it clear, however, that there is still, in certain quarters, doubt as to the intentions of His Majesty's Government for the constitutional future of India, and that there is doubt, too, as to whether the position of minorities, whether political or religious, is sufficiently safeguarded in relation to any future constitutional change by assurances already given. There are two main points that have emerged. On those two points His Majesty's Government now desire me to make their position clear.

6. The first is as to the position of minorities in relation to any future constitutional schemes. It has already been made clear that my declaration of last October does not exclude examination of any part either of the Act of 1935 or of the policy and plans on which it is based. His Majesty's Government's concern that full weight should be given to the views of minorities in any revision has also been brought out. That remains the position of His Majesty's Government.

It goes without saying that they could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by

large and powerful elements in India's national-life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government.

7. The second point of general interest is the machinery for building within the British Commonwealth of Nations the new constitutional scheme when the time comes. There has been very strong insistence that the framing of that scheme should be primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves, and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life. His Majesty's Government are in sympathy with that desire and wish to see it given the fullest practical expression subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed on her and for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility. It is clear that a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved. But His Majesty's Government authorize me to declare that they will most readily assent to the setting up after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new Constitution, and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree. Meanwhile they will welcome and promote in any way possible every sincere and practical step that may be taken by representative Indians themselves to reach a basis of friendly agreement, first upon the form which the post-war representative body should take and the methods by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and secondly, upon the principles and outlines of the Constitution itself. They trust, however, that for the period of the war (with the Central Government reconstituted and strengthened in the manner I have described, and with the help of the War Advisory Council) all parties, communities and interests will combine and co-operate in making a notable Indian contribution to the victory of the world cause which is at stake. Moreover, they hope that in this process new bonds of union and understanding will emerge, and thus pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament.

## 6. CONGRESS RESOLUTION (August 22, 1940)

### REPLY TO THE VICEROY

The Working Committee at its meeting at Wastha passed the following Resolution on August 22, 1940, in reply to the Viceroy's

statement of August 8, and Mr. Amery's subsequent statement in Parliament :

"The Working Committee have read the statement issued by the Viceroy on the authority of the British Government on August 8, and the report of the speech of the Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons, explaining the Viceroy's statement. They note with deep regret that the British Government have rejected the friendly offer and practical suggestion contained in the Poona resolution of the A.I.C.C. of July 28, framed for a solution of the deadlock and to enable the Indian National Congress to withdraw its non-co-operation and secure in the recent crisis the patriotic co-operation of all the people of India in the governance of India and the organization of national defence.

"The Working Committee have read with pain and indignation the declarations and assumptions contained in the statements and speeches made on behalf of the British Government which seek to deny India her natural right of complete national freedom and reiterate the untenable claim that Britain should maintain herself in a dominant position in India in the discharge of the higher functions of the state. These claims render false and empty even their own promise to recognize India at an early date as a free and equal unit within the British Commonwealth.

"Such claims and recent events and developments in the world have confirmed the Committee's conviction that India cannot function within the orbit of an imperial power and must attain the status of a free and independent nation. This does not prevent close association with other countries within a comity of free nations for the peace and progress of the world.

"The Working Committee are of the opinion that the assertion contained in the statements made on behalf of the British Government that they will not part with power and responsibility in favour of the elected representatives of the people of India and that, therefore, the present autocratic and irresponsible system of government must continue, so long as any group of people or the Princes, as distinguished from the people of the States, or perhaps even foreign vested interests, raise objections to any Constitution framed by the elected representatives of the people of India, is a direct encouragement and incitement to civil discord and strife, and amounts to a fatal blow to all willingness to compromise and adjustment of claims.

"The Committee regret that although the Congress has never thought in terms of coercing any minority, much less of asking the British Government to do so, the demand for a

settlement of the Constitution, through a Constituent Assembly of duly elected representatives, has been misrepresented as coercion, and the issue of minorities has been made into an insuperable barrier to India's progress. The Congress has proposed that minority rights should be amply protected by agreement with elected representatives of the minorities concerned. The Working Committee, therefore, cannot but conclude that the attitude and assertions contained in statements made on behalf of the British Government, confirm the prevailing feeling that the British authority has been continually operating so as to create, maintain and aggravate differences in India's national life.

"The Working Committee note with astonishment that the demand for the constitution of a provisional Government, composed of persons commanding the confidence of the various elected groups in the present Central Legislature, formed under the 1919 Constitution of India, has been described by the Secretary of State for India as one that would raise the unsolved constitutional issue, and prejudice it in favour of the majority and against the minorities.

"The Working Committee are of the opinion that the rejection of this proposal unmistakably indicates that there is no willingness on the part of the British Government to part with any power and authority even for the immediate purpose of securing co-operation in the war efforts. The British Government would gather together and carry on with such dissentient groups and individuals as oppose the wishes of the majority of the people of India and without any co-ordination with the elected Legislature at the centre or in the provinces, rather than concede anything that would work towards the recognition of the rights of the people of India to rule themselves democratically.

"For these reasons the Working Committee have come to the conclusion that the statements referred to are wholly opposed not only to the principle of democracy, as acclaimed by the British Government in the war, but also to the best interests of India, and they cannot be a Party to accepting the proposals contained in the statement or advising the country to accept them.

"The Working Committee consider that these declarations and offers not only fall far short of the Congress demand, but would be impediments to the evolution of a free and united India.

"The Working Committee call upon the people to condemn the attitude adopted by the British Government by means of public meetings and otherwise, as also through their elected representatives in the provincial Legislature."

## 7. CONGRESS RESOLUTION (September 15, 1940)

On September 15 the All-India Congress Committee (by 192 votes to 7) passed the following Resolution in pursuance of which Mr. Gandhi assumes leadership and orders Civil Disobedience.

"The All-India Congress Committee cannot submit to a policy which is a denial of India's natural right to freedom, which suppresses the free expression of public opinion and which would lead to the degradation of her people and their continued enslavement. By following this policy the British Government have created an intolerable situation, and are imposing upon the Congress a struggle for the preservation of the honour and the elementary rights of the people. The Congress is pledged under Gandhi's leadership to non-violence for the vindication of India's freedom. At this grave crisis in the movement for national freedom, the All-India Congress Committee, therefore, requests him to guide the Congress in the action that should be taken. The Delhi Resolution, confirmed by the A.I.C.C. at Poona, which prevented him from so doing, no longer applies. It has lapsed.

"The All-India Congress Committee sympathises with the British people as well as the peoples of all other countries involved in the war. Congressmen cannot withhold their admiration for the bravery and endurance shown by the British nation in the face of danger and peril. They can have no ill will against them, and the spirit of 'Satyagraha' forbids the Congress from doing anything with a view to embarrass them. But this self-imposed restraint cannot be taken to the extent of self-extinction. The Congress must insist on the fullest freedom to pursue its policy, based on non-violence. The Congress has, however, no desire at the present moment to extend non-violent resistance, should this become necessary, beyond what is required for the preservation of the liberties of the people."

In the end, the Resolution clarifies the Congress stand on non-violence in these words:

"The Committee is convinced, and recent world events have demonstrated, that complete world disarmament is necessary, and the establishment of new and juster political and economic order, if the world is not to destroy itself and revert to barbarism. A free India will, therefore, throw all her weight in favour of world disarmament and should herself be prepared to give a lead in this to the world. Such lead will inevitably depend on external factors and internal conditions, but the

State would do its utmost to give effect to this policy of disarmament. Effective disarmament and the establishment of world peace by the ending of national wars, depend ultimately on the removal of the causes of wars and national conflicts. These causes must be rooted out by the ending of the domination of one country over another and the exploitation of one people or group by another. To that end India will peacefully labour, and it is with this objective in view that the people of India desire to attain the status of a free and independent nation. Such freedom will be the prelude to the close association with other countries within a comity of free nations for the peace and progress of the world."

## APPENDIX C

### I. TRIPURI AND AFTER

(See pp. 147-171)

The annual Session of the Indian National Congress was held in 1939 at Tripuri, under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose. Actually Mr Bose was not able to take the chair at the sessions and conduct the proceedings as he was on his sick-bed at Tripuri the whole time. In these circumstances, and owing to reasons set forth below, the arrangement of business had largely to be decided on by the "elders" of the Congress. The President, however, kept in touch with proceedings and gave his opinions on the conduct of the session from time to time.

The Tripuri session was preceded by fierce controversies surrounding the presidential election contest. This is one of the more unhappy chapters of Congress history. Personal issues eclipsed real political controversy, slogans and labels served to misrepresent causes and groups, and an attempt was made to make the contest one of confidence in outstanding personalities or in two alleged schools of thought.

The Bose section alleged that the rest of the Congress, which it called the "Right," was about to make a compromise with imperialism, that it would willy-nilly accept the Federation and prevent a real national struggle from developing. Mr. Bose was put forward as the advocate of an uncompromising struggle against imperialism, supported by immediate and drastic action, and as the champion of the "Left." The different currents of opinion in the Congress and both the extent and the limitations of these differences have been dealt with by the author in the chapter "From Lucknow to Tripuri," pp. 126-135.

"Left" and "Right," however, served as rallying points. It was obvious that there was a large volume of discontent against the cautious policy of the "High Command," and a widespread desire amongst the rank and file to press forward with a militant challenge to the British Raj. This, and the personal popularity of Subhas Chandra Bose, was responsible for his victory at the elections. It may also be added that Mr. Bose undertook an electioneering campaign just prior to the elections and travelled over most of Congress India.

The Opposite side, which was alleged to represent the "Right," also appears to have departed from the high traditions of the Congress



in this election. It also confused the issues and almost made the election a vote of confidence in Mr. Gandhi, while in fact the contest centred round no such thing. Its candidate had no claims to represent a militant policy, and while a Congress veteran, with a very creditable record of long service and with special claims to recognition for his stand for the rights of the peoples of the Indian States, he was probably considered by the socialists and other militants in the Congress as their opponent, especially as he had been engaged, just previously, in enforcing disciplinary action against "communists" and others in South India. However, from the point of view of opposition to imperialism, he, like other "Rightists," was as ardent an opponent and as uncompromising as anyone else.

When Congress met at Tripuri the atmosphere was tense. Its business had not been prepared, for there had been no meetings of the Working Committee previously, as was the practice in previous years. The President was ill, and the doyens of the Congress, who were its natural leaders in these circumstances, were almost all committed to the other side. In these circumstances the bulk of the Congress asserted itself.

Nehru was alone among the Congress leaders who had not been involved in the controversy to any great extent, and it was partly due to his efforts that the unity of the Congress, much desired by all groups, was maintained at Tripuri. Resolutions were passed reiterating the demand for national independence, opposing the introduction of the Federal Constitution embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, and declaring the support of Congress for the movements amongst the States peoples. At the same time, confidence in Mr. Gandhi and in the members of the Working Committee, who had resigned, was recorded. Congress had thus steered itself through these rough seas and clear of rocks, but only to strike against others soon afterwards.

The "Right" made the issue one of confidence in Mr. Gandhi. A resolution moved by the then Premier of the United Provinces, not a member of the Working Committee, was practically a vote of confidence in Mr. Gandhi and an instruction to the President to accept the instructions of Mr. Gandhi, especially in the formation of the next Working Committee.

The disputes now centred around the question of the composition of the next Working Committee. The "Right" stood for what appears to have been termed a "homogeneous" Cabinet; Mr. Bose wanted either a Cabinet of the "Left" or of "Left" predominance. It is obvious from subsequent controversy that Subhas Bose was willing to accept a composite Cabinet with adequate representation of his nominees. But this issue proved difficult and led to trouble in the Congress for several months.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Calcutta (May, 1939) to decide the issue, as the Congress was still without a Working Committee. Much negotiation and conversation took place and it seemed as though peace would be attained. It appears that the solution turned round a plan for the inclusion of the "basic ten," Congress veterans, leaders in their own areas, many of them past-Presidents, who have been in every Working Committee since 1930 at least, and who are in every way recognized as part and parcel of Congress leadership. The remainder of the committee was to be filled by such nominees of Mr. Bose as the rest would accept. This plan, though apparently accepted by both sides in principle, broke down at the last minute and Mr. Subhas Bose resigned. All efforts by Nehru and others, including the Socialists, to persuade him to withdraw his resignation proved futile.

After Bose's resignation, the A.I.C.C. elected Rajendra Prasad

President of the Congress for 1939-1940 in place of Bose, and he at once proceeded to form a Working Committee.

After resigning from the presidentship of the Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose formed the "Forward Bloc." This was not announced as an opposition party outside the ranks of the Congress, but was apparently designed to rally all the elements within the Congress which were either opposed to the "High Command" or were, at any rate, in favour of the policy which was afterwards put forward as the programme of the bloc. Unlike the Congress, it was not an organization that had its own suffrage and its own machinery, out of which its programmes or its executive emerged. It was, what it called itself—a "bloc"—but with policies diametrically opposed, in spirit at any rate, to the recent decisions of the Congress at Tripuri. It gathered to itself in the beginning the Peasant and Socialist leaders of the younger generation. Other groups, like that led by M. N. Roy, also appear to have given it some support.

The programme of the Forward Bloc may be summarised thus:

(1) To ensure that the Congress ministries were effectively subordinated to the provincial and All-India Congress Committees; (2) to establish direct and close ties between the Congress and the working class, peasant and State people's organisations; (3) to raise a permanent volunteer corps; and (4) to intensify the national struggle against the Federal Act.

Mr. Bose also considered that the country should embark on civil disobedience straight away. Actually the bloc called for the initiation of a nation-wide campaign on the 6th April, 1940, independent of and in opposition to Congress decisions. The campaign had very limited success.

A further rift between Bose and the Congress became apparent when he called on the country to protest against the decisions of the A.I.C.C., which, according to him, were undertaken in the interests of Congress strength and unity. The Working Committee thereupon found him guilty of "deliberate and flagrant breach of discipline," and disqualified him from holding any elective post in the Congress for three years.

## 2. A NOTE ON THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS\*

### I. HISTORY

The first session of the Indian National Congress met in Bombay (at midday) on the 28th December, 1885. The origins of the Congress are not lost in obscurity, but any simple and short categorical statement about it would be inaccurate. The Indian National Congress was not born in a day; its early history prior to the actual meeting of the first session covers a number of years of Indian history. Its roots go back to movements of the Indian renaissance dating at least as early as 1830. The first political movement which was in the line of the pedigree of the Congress was the British-Indian Association of Calcutta founded in 1851. Similar organizations came into being in other areas, and the awakening reached out for an All-India political expression, which resulted in a number of projects from diverse quarters, some of which even resulted in preliminary meetings of an All-India character prior to 1885. At the same time Mr. A. O. Hume, a retired British member of the Indian Civil Service, came forward with a plan for a non-political All-India organization. All this resulted in the calling of an All-India Conference of the Indian National Union, which was the first session of the Indian National Congress.

The Congress was from the very beginning a national and not a

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\* Written in November, 1940.

sectional organization; it drew its strength from every part and every community of India, and while it had not at that time any mass basis for organization, it was rooted in the agrarian conditions and the needs of the Indian masses. This latter aspect has undergone considerable change since, until today it is the outstanding factor in the Congress policy, method and outlook. Hindus, Parsees, Christians, Moslems and Sikhs built the Congress; its first session was presided over by Mr. W. C. Bonnerji, an Indian Christian. In these early days the Congress pleaded for reform; it criticized the administration, but it accepted British hegemony in India and regarded Indian control of India as not only possible, but natural and legitimate. But soon the Congress fell under official disapproval. The Marquess of Dufferin, the Viceroy (1884-1888), attacked it in a speech in which he charged it with sedition and sneered at the "microscopic minority." The third session of the Congress, however, had 1,248 delegates attending it out of the 1,500 elected. Three million people had been concerned in their election.

The statement of objects and the constitution of the Congress have undergone much change since the day of its birth. Prayers for piecemeal reform gave place to a demand for *Swaraj* in 1906, proclaimed by the Congress President, Dadhabhai Naoroji. The years preceding the last war saw the conflict of national forces within the Congress, which differed from one another on questions of speed and method. The increasing awakening of national consciousness, and the pressure of social conditions in India forced Congress policy in the direction of its subsequent development.

The war and post-war years saw an extension of the Congress and national activity in ever-widening circles of Indian society. At the same time the Indian workers began to organize themselves. The technique of the Congress passed from periodic meetings to sustained activity. Home Rule now became, for a time, the Congress demand. In 1916 the Congress placed before the British Government a moderate scheme of reform which was to lead to Dominion Government in course of time. It was supported by the then Moslem League, and was called the Congress-League scheme. The British Government rejected the proposal and formulated its own scheme, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919. These in turn were rejected by the Congress which now had outgrown its earlier methods, and with a vaster mass behind it, it embarked on non-cooperation.

This was the beginning of the modern Congress. In 1920 it formulated a new Constitution, under the guidance of Mr. Gandhi. The object was now stated as *Swaraj*, which still remained undefined in its relationship to Empire. In 1929, the Congress, under the presidency of Nehru, carried an amendment moved by Mr. Gandhi that *Swaraj* in the Constitution shall mean complete independence. *Swaraj* now meant separation from the Empire. The Declaration of Indian Independence which was read out at thousands of meetings all over India, in village and town, affirmed the allegiance of the Indian masses to this aim, and to the struggle to achieve it by direct challenge to imperialism—namely, by civil disobedience.

The era of struggle also witnesses the further expansion of the Congress, the development of an efficient and disciplined organization, with all-India ramifications, which has more than once stood up to the ordeal of severe repression. The Congress, as has been repeatedly stressed by Nehru, is a "fighting organization." Its strength is derived from the Indian people; its democratic organization ensures its vitality.

Today the Congress has well over six million paying and active members. It is the largest political organization in the world. Its

machinery covers hundreds of thousands of Indian villages and all the towns of British India. Its influence has spread into the territories ruled by the Princes, where parallel organizations, now incorporated in the Indian States Peoples conference, have grown up.

## II. THE CONSTITUTION

Under Article II. of the Congress Constitution\* the Indian National Congress shall comprise:—

1. Primary members enrolled under Article III.
2. Village, Ward, Town, Taluka, Tahsil (Subdivision), District or other local committees.
3. Provincial Congress Committees.
4. Annual Session of the Congress.
5. All-India Congress Committee.
6. Working Committee.

It may also include (a) Committees or associations directly organized by the All-India Congress Committee or the Working Committee, and (b) committees organized by any Provincial Congress Committee, in accordance with rules approved by the Working Committee.

### *Membership*

Membership† of the Congress is open to any person of the age of eighteen years and over who declares his belief in the aim of the Congress as set out in Article I. of its Constitution, and pays a subscription of four annas (four and half pence). He is then placed on the register of the Congress, kept in an authorized Congress Office within his district. He may not be so registered in more than one place.

A member may not, however, exercise his right to vote at any Congress election unless he has been on the register for three months prior to the date of the election.

### *The Annual Session*

The Annual Session of the Congress, which is held in a different place each year, as decided by the Working Committee, is its supreme body. In the early days the delegates of the Congress were not strictly limited in numbers, nor was the electoral college well defined. Now, under the Constitution, the Annual Session consists of

- (i) the President,
- (ii) the ex-Presidents (not otherwise disqualified),
- (iii) delegates elected under Article VI. of the Constitution.

These delegates who, as we shall see, represent the primary members, are elected, often after severe contest, according to strict rules. Disputes are referred to properly constituted tribunals, from which appeals are permitted to higher tribunals. Officers are appointed by the respective organs of the Congress to conduct these elections.

### *The Election*

The provincial Congress Committee is required to prepare a roll of its primary members who are qualified to vote, and a statement on this roll must be submitted to the All-India Congress Committee office (giving separately the number of urban and rural members in each district). Only those members on this roll can vote at the election of

\* As amended at Haripura in 1938.

† Article 3.

delegates in the Province. If no such statement is submitted by the Provincial Committee in time, the Province may forfeit its right to elect delegates. The Working Committee appoints a day before which the delegates for the Province must be elected, and also the quota of delegates which each (Congress) Province is entitled to return to the A.I.C.C.

The Provincial Committee must divide the Province into fixed territorial, urban and rural constituencies and determine, every year, the number of delegates to be allotted to each constituency in the Province. (Urban area means a town with a population of ten thousand or more.)

Each rural and urban area in a district is entitled to elect one delegate for every 250 duly qualified members on the rolls, provided that no Province shall return a larger number of delegates than a proportion of one delegate to every 100,000 of its inhabitants. It is also provided that out of the total number from any Province not more than seventy-five per cent. shall be rural and not more than twenty-five per cent. urban delegates. (There are certain special rules about Bombay City and Delhi which does not affect the principle.) A certified list of delegates elected is required to be sent by the Provincial Congress Committee to the Working Committee before the day appointed for the purpose.

Every delegate so elected receives a certificate signed by the Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee on payment of a fee of five rupees (seven shillings and sixpence).

### *Provincial Congress Committee*

The delegates thus elected from a Province constitute the Provincial Congress Committee. In addition to these delegates, the President and ex-Presidents of the Congress (not otherwise disqualified) resident in the Province shall also belong to the Provincial Committee.

A Provincial Committee, subject to the general control of the A.I.C.C., is in charge of the affairs of the Congress within its own Province, and for this purpose frames rules which come into operation only with the previous sanction of the Working Committee. Provincial Congress Committees will not be recognized by the Working Committee, unless they have complied with the Constitution of the Congress or rules framed thereunder by the Working Committee. The Working Committee has the duty of setting up a Provincial Committee, if an existing Provincial Committee does not function within the terms of the Constitution.

### *The All-India Congress Committee*

The delegates in every Province assemble in a meeting called for the purpose, and elect from among themselves one-eighth of their number as representatives of the Province on the A.I.C.C. This election is by Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote. The members of the A.I.C.C. so elected receive their certificates of membership of that body from the secretary of their Provincial Committee.

Delegates thus elected from the Provinces, the President of the Annual Session, the Treasurer of the Congress and the ex-Presidents (not otherwise disqualified) constitute the A.I.C.C.

It is the duty of the A.I.C.C. to carry out the programme laid down by the Congress at its Annual Session, and to deal with all matters that arise during its term of office. It has the power to make rules under the Constitution for regulating the affairs of the Congress. The President of the Congress is the Chairman of the A.I.C.C. It meets when called by the Working Committee, or when requisitioned by twenty-four members. In practice the A.I.C.C. meets frequently during the year and alone decides major questions of policy.

### *The Working Committee*

The Working Committee consists of the President of the Congress, thirteen members, including not more than three general secretaries, appointed by the President from amongst the members of the A.I.C.C., and a treasurer, also appointed by the President from amongst the delegates. It is the supreme executive of the Congress and is responsible to the All-India Congress Committee. The Working Committee is required to place before the A.I.C.C., at its meetings, reports of its proceedings, and to assign at least one clear day for resolutions by private members of the A.I.C.C.

It appoints inspectors to examine the records, papers and accounts of all Congress organizations, it has rule-making power, it superintends and directs and controls all Congress Committees, and may take disciplinary action against a Committee or individual.

### *The President*

The Presidentship of the Congress is the highest honour and the greatest responsibility that the Indian people can confer. This office has been held during the last fifty-five years by men and women of all races and creeds, many of whom are still active campaigners.

The President is now elected by the delegates, who record their votes in each Province in the prescribed manner. It is, however, provided that the elected candidates to the chair of the Congress must secure not less than 50 per cent. of the total votes polled in the presidential election.

Any ten delegates may jointly nominate any delegate or qualified ex-President of the Congress as a candidate for the office of President for the ensuing year. The list of qualified nominees is circulated to the Provinces to be voted upon by the delegates on the day appointed for the purpose.

## III. THE CONGRESS MINISTRIES

The Congress decided to contest the elections to the provincial legislatures (February, 1937), under the Act of 1935, on the basis of an electoral programme (Appendix A, p. 401). Contrary to the expectations of the British Government and its supporters, Congress secured an overwhelming victory at the polls, and was returned as a majority party in six out of the eleven provinces and as the largest single party in all (Appendix A. 4, p. 409).

The reasons which made Congress decline to accept office are discussed by the author on pages 55-64. The Congress ministries were eventually formed in July, 1937.

The rôle of Congress ministers is not easy to understand. On the one hand, they were ministers of the Crown, under an imperialist Constitution with strong safeguards on all sides and with very restricted competence in the affairs of the country, much of which was still controlled by the Central Government, the Civil Service and by the British Government. On the other hand, the ministers were the spokesmen of the mighty national movement of India and they were under the discipline of their party, and directly controlled by the Congress Working Committee. The relations of a ministry with the governor of the Province alone was not conclusive on matters of policy which had a bearing on India as a whole. Again, these ministers and their parties were pledged to opposition to the very Constitution under which they functioned. They therefore sponsored and carried motions against the imperial and All-India policy of the British Government.

The ministers were expected by the Congress and the country to be the champions of India against her rulers and not to settle down to

ministerial routine or respectability. Apart from this, the Congress ministers were regarded by the masses as their friends, leaders and spokesmen. They were not officials, shut off from the people, as under the old regime. All this created difficulties and much friction on all sides.

These different tendencies caused conflicts, referred to by Nehru in Sections IV. and V., "From Lucknow to Tripuri."

The degree of conflict differed in different areas according to the nature of circumstances, the character of the leaders, the strength of Congress organizations and the political advancement of the people of the territory.

But certain general observations may be made. The Parliamentary work of the Congress was placed by the Working Committee under the superintendence and direction of the Congress Parliamentary Board, consisting of three members—Maulana Kalam Azad, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Sirdar Vallabhai Patel. They functioned as a unit, though division of work and territory was arranged as between them. The Committee was responsible to the Working Committee and therefore to Congress as a whole. The Parliamentary Sub-Committee came into existence before the ministries, and, indeed, its competence extended to the entire realm of work in which Congressmen were concerned with the legislatures. Thus the Parliamentary Sub-Committee had to deal with the Congress Party in the Central Legislature, with the selection of candidates for elections, with disputes arising thereon, with decisions on principles of formation or resignation of ministries. The Board was also in control of the discipline of these parliamentary parties and the ministries. Its outlook was conditioned by the all-India situation, and by the needs and the direction of the policy of the National movement as a whole. The Parliamentary Board has often come under criticism of Congressmen of the Left, and from ministers of the Right as well as from the provincial and local committees of the Congress and the A.I.C.C. itself. But all India pays tribute to the magnificent work of this Committee and the discipline it enforced. It kept up the all-India unity of Parliamentary policy and prevented Congress ministers becoming the ministers of the Province, or "Governor's ministers." On the other hand, it has been criticized as being inclined to accept the ministers' view of affairs much too often. We are too near events to form an objective estimate of the arduous and onerous tasks of this Committee.

The Congress expected ministers to be its spokesmen and to be in touch with the movement in the country. In practice this created difficulties, especially at the start. In some areas where Congress was more militant, some Congressmen and Committees appear to have at first thought that they made the decisions which the ministers just carried out. This error was not widespread, and, on the whole, the Congress movement behaved with remarkable wisdom, restraint and responsibility without at the same time becoming reduced to a secondary position. There were also ministers who announced that the function of local Congress Committees was to popularise their work and generally to act as propagandists for the Provincial governments which they now controlled. This view, publicly proclaimed only in one province, received a well-deserved snub from every quarter. The retort came that Provincial Autonomy was not *Swaraj*, and that the Provincial ministries were not Indian national governments.

The Congress had not laid down, in constitutional terms, the relations between the provincial and local committees and the ministers, but the spirit of this relationship and its general principle became more obvious each day. The conflicts, which occasionally arose by a departure from these principles, resulted in the few unhappy episodes in Congress ministerial history which have been dealt with by the author (pp. 99-113). The relationship that should exist has also been outlined by him in a

statement to the press (p. 78). But the fear in the Congress rank and file, that the ministers were becoming more and more powerful in Congress counsels, gained ground, and the Provincial and the All-India Congress Committees became watchful and critical. Much adjustment and admonition administered to one side or the other or both, no doubt, forms part of the full and private history of the Working Committee's proceedings.

#### IV. THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES

The Congress parties in the Legislatures were also under strict discipline. Some of them were unduly dominated by the Provincial Prime Ministers, who were leaders of their parties in the Legislature. Where this happened the Congress movement has suffered, even though the government, judged by British constitutional standards, may have been a greater success and received greater praise from the Provincial Governor. Where, however, a serious conflict arose, the Parliamentary Board intervened. It has been sometimes suggested that under this procedure the members of the Legislature became rubber stamps, and that the real battles were in the party meetings. It would perhaps be truer to say that the real issues were decided in the country and in the counsels of the Congress as a whole.

The Provincial Legislatures were elected on a franchise decided by the British Parliament. Indian opinion, and certainly Congress opinion, demanded adult suffrage. The Lothian Franchise Committee provided for a franchise which gave the vote to only about 11 per cent. of the population for the purposes of the Provincial elections. This made an electoral toll of thirty millions for all the Provinces together. The electoral arrangements fractionalised the electorate and incorporated many undemocratic devices, in addition to the restricted electorate. These are all part of the system of checks and safeguards introduced by the British side. The result was that the impact of mass opinion was stepped down as much as the imperialist side found it possible to do. It gave predominance to vested interests, reactionary elements and separatists and fractional tendencies. Side by side with men elected by tens of thousands of voters sat others who came from sheltered electorates, where a few men or a few thousand would make the decision on their candidate. Communal electorates perpetuated and accentuated the division between Hindu and Moslem politicians. In Bombay alone as many as seventeen different types of electorates exist. In spite of all this, the Indian masses asserted themselves and created a magnificent electoral record. The general electorate recorded a 62 per cent. poll and the election campaigns roused much mass consciousness. The votes, though confined to the few in a village, largely on the basis of property, brought into operation the sentiments of the entire village. Non-voters came to the polling booths with their comrades in the village who had the vote. They made it the vote of the village and to some extent corrected the error (or worse) which the British Government had imposed on them.

The Provincial Congress Committee had a large and almost final say in the choice of candidates and other matters concerning the conduct of the election. But all lists of candidates and major policies were subject to the control of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee.

Under the 1935 Act five out of the eleven Provinces have been provided with second chambers. The reasons for this are not very obvious. Some people consider them more sinister than obvious. They obtain in Provinces where Congress is more powerful than any other combination of parties or groups, and where the landlord element is not able to



control the elections to the Lower House. The franchise for these Upper Houses is much narrower, and it is designed to protect larger landed and property interests. In some Provinces, however, Congress has managed to obtain sufficient volume of support on the basis of its national appeal, even in these chambers. They have, however, hindered progressive developments in the Provinces where they exist, notably in Behar.

## V. THE CENTRAL LEGISLATURE

There is a Congress Legislature Party in the Central Legislature at Delhi also. In fact it is the earlier of the present Congress Parliamentary Parties. After the withdrawal of non-co-operation in 1933, and after much deliberation, it was decided that the Congress should contest the forthcoming elections to the Central Assembly (in 1934). This was done, and the Congress gained most of the seats it contested. It found itself the largest party in the Assembly and also had the majority of the elected members in that body.

The Central Legislature in India consists of two houses. They are part of the structure created by the Act of 1919. The Upper House is the Council of State, consisting of over 60 members, only about half of whom are elected, and that on a very high property or other restrictive basis. The Lower House is called the Assembly. It consists of 144 members, out of whom 44 are Government officials or Government nominees. Usually about 28 of these members are officials, and the others are various individuals, handpicked by the Government to "represent" certain alleged interests. They have all (with the one exception of Mr. Joshi, nominated to represent Labour) always taken the Government Whip. Out of the remaining 100, a number of seats are held by members returned by special electorates, all representing vested interests such as planters, landlords, Europeans, trades and commerce interests (Indian and European). These members are elected by small juntas of these interests, such as chambers (of-commerce) and Associations. The remainder are returned, partly by a general electorate, and partly by special electorates based on religious communities. It is only the general electorate on which public opinion has influence. Congress contested all these general seats and won almost all of them, and it has about fifty-two or fifty-three members returned as a result. Some others take the Congress whip on specific issues. The Government of India, led by its officials (the Treasury Bench!), is defeated on an average about thirty times in the year, often by the Congress alone and often by a combination. The most recent notable defeat was when the Assembly threw out the War (Supplementary) Budget. In this instance the Moslem League under Mr. Jinnah remained neutral. But a defeat in the Legislature does not affect the Government, as it is autocratic in law and in fact, and not dependent on the confidence of the Legislature or the people. In these circumstances the issue of a Congress ministry at the centre does not arise.

The Congress Parliamentary Party in the Central Assembly has no power over the Provincial parties or any competence in provincial matters. They are all subject to the control of the Parliamentary Subcommittee and thus of the Working Committee and Congress as a whole.

There have been meetings of Congress ministers from all the Provinces for the discussion of matters of general interest; Congress and non-Congress ministries have co-operated with the Congress in such ventures as the All-India Planning Commission set up by the Congress under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru, but the Parliamentary Subcommittee of the Working Committee remains the central and supreme directing and controlling factor in the Parliamentary activities of the Congress.

